Timeline: From the Stone Age to 1500

B.C.

5 million years ago

1 million years ago — Emergence of the genus *Homo*

5 million years ago — Emergence of first hominids

10000

ca. 7000 — Domestication of plants and animals

ca. 3500 — First city civilizations appear in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley

2600-2500 — Pyramids of Giza are built in Egypt

1000

ca. 1780 — Shang Dynasty in China begins in the Yellow River Valley

ca. 1750 — Hammurabi's Code

ca. 1500 — Aryan invasion of northern India

ca. 1010–926 — David unites the tribes of Israel

500

507 — The Roman Republic commences

ca. 550 — The Buddha begins preaching

447 — Pericles commissions the Parthenon on the Acropolis

100

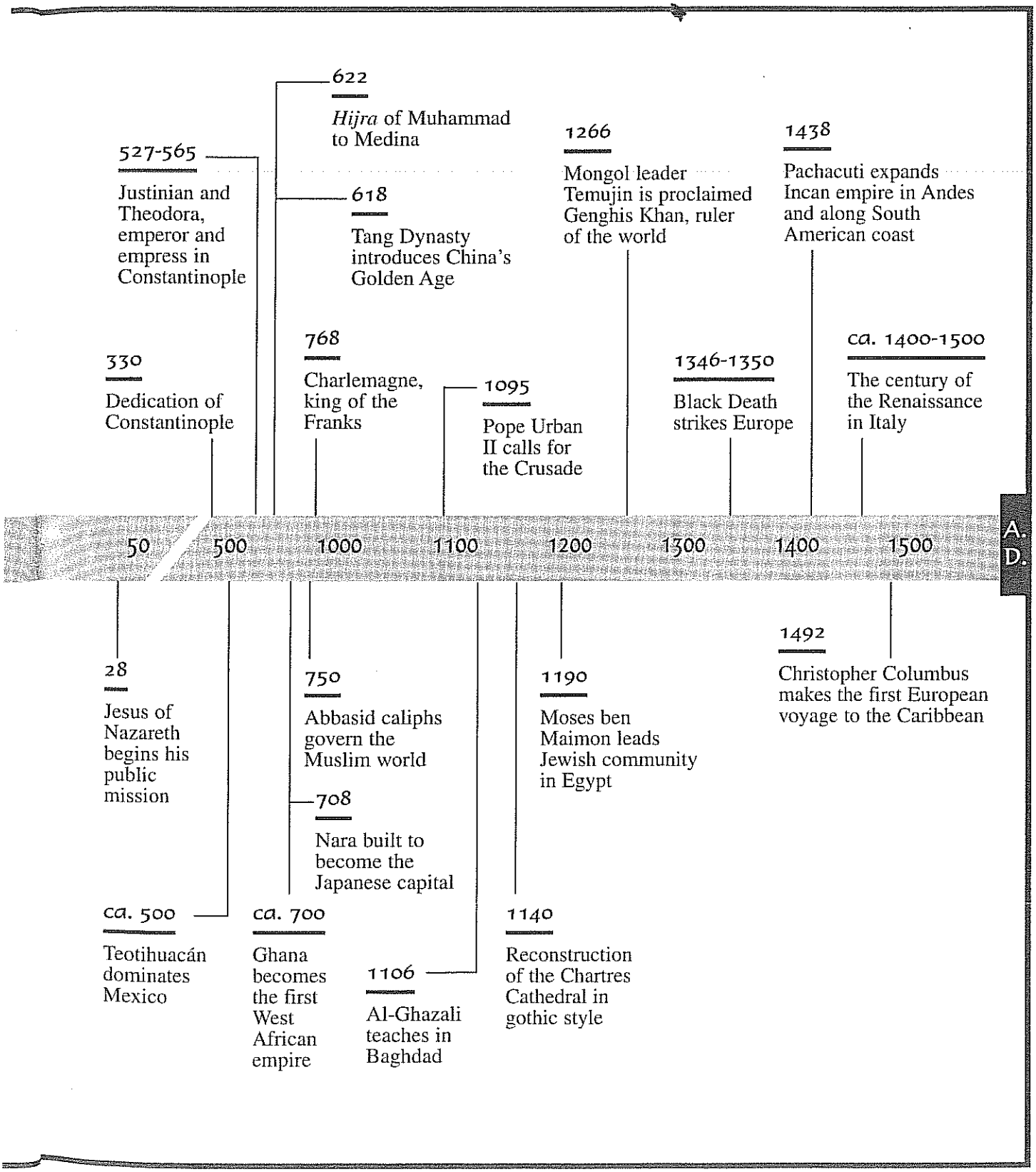
221-210 — Qin Shi Huangdi rules a unified China

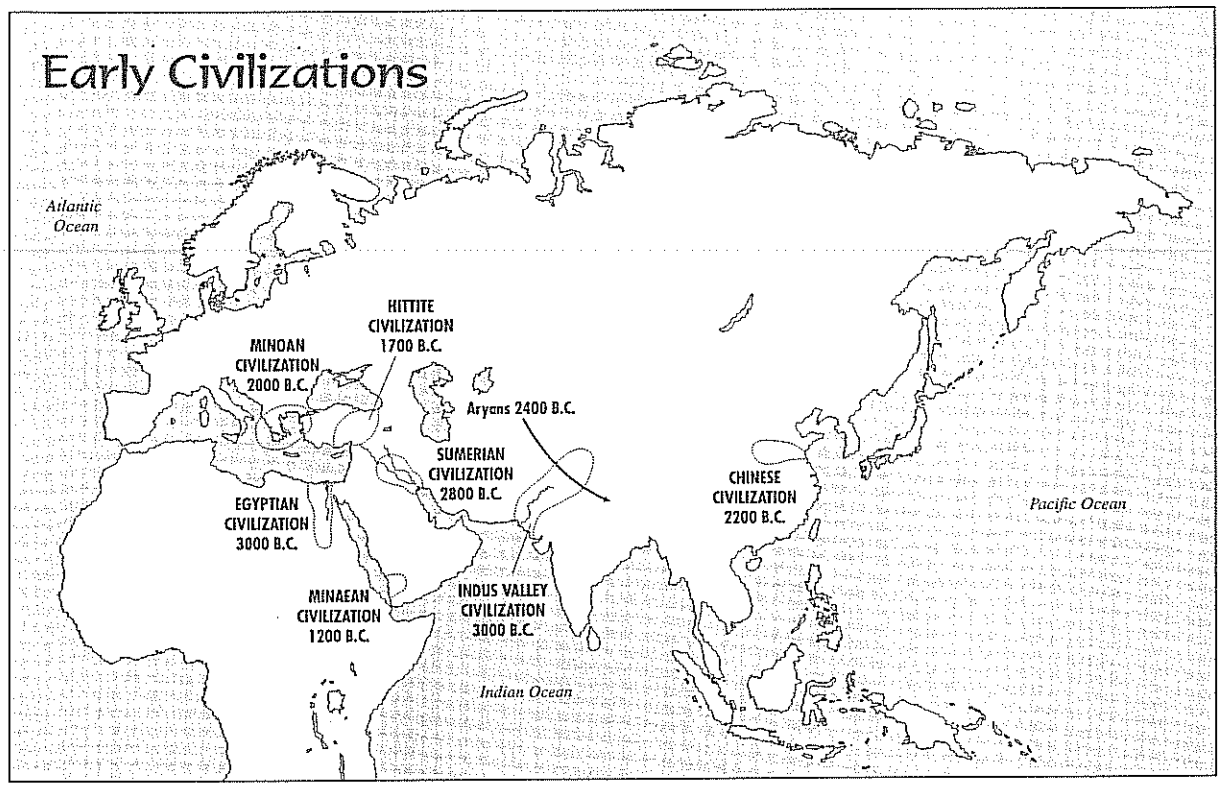
50

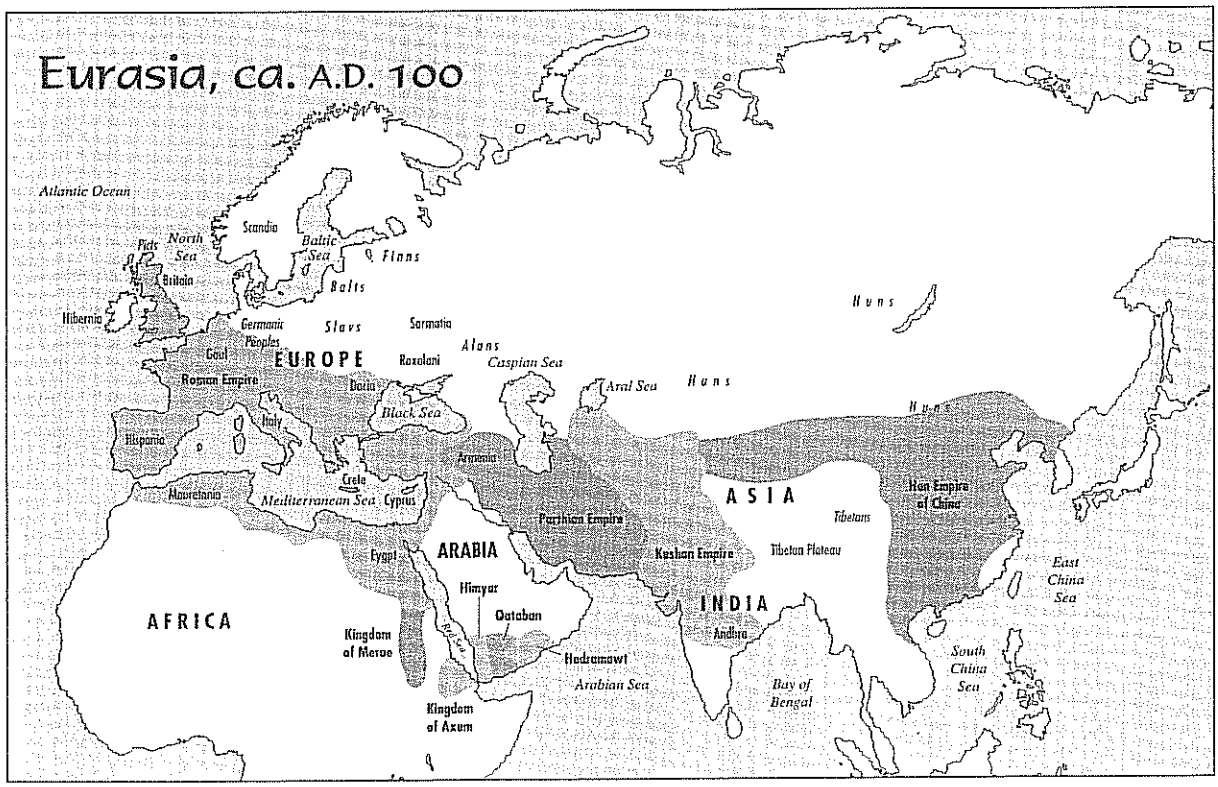
44 — Death of Caesar on the Ides of March

28 — Augustus Caesar governs the Roman Empire

Amenemha III
1800 B.C.


622
Hijra of Muhammad to Medina
527-565
Justinian and Theodora, emperor and empress in Constantinople
618
Tang Dynasty introduces China's Golden Age
1266
Mongol leader Temujin is proclaimed Genghis Khan, ruler of the world
1438
Pachacuti expands Incan empire in Andes and along South American coast
330
Dedication of Constantinople
768
Charlemagne, king of the Franks
1095
Pope Urban II calls for the Crusade
1346-1350
Black Death strikes Europe
ca. 1400-1500
The century of the Renaissance in Italy
50
500
1000
1100
1200
1300
1400
1500
A. D.
28
Jesus of Nazareth begins his public mission
750
Abbasid caliphs govern the Muslim world
1190
Moses ben Maimon leads Jewish community in Egypt
1492
Christopher Columbus makes the first European voyage to the Caribbean
708
Nara built to become the Japanese capital
ca. 500
Teotihuacán dominates Mexico
ca. 700
Ghana becomes the first West African empire
1106
Al-Ghazali teaches in Baghdad
1140
Reconstruction of the Chartres Cathedral in gothic style


Early Civilizations
Atlantic Ocean
HITTITE CIVILIZATION 1700 B.C.
MINOAN CIVILIZATION 2000 B.C.
Aryans 2400 B.C.
SUMERIAN CIVILIZATION 2800 B.C.
CHINESE CIVILIZATION 2200 B.C.
Pacific Ocean
EGYPTIAN CIVILIZATION 3000 B.C.
MINAEAN CIVILIZATION 1200 B.C.
INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION 3000 B.C.
Indian Ocean


Eurasia, ca. A.D. 100
Atlantic Ocean
Scandia
North Sea
Baltic Sea
Finns
Balts
Picts
Britain
Hibernia
Germanic Peoples
Slavs
Sarmatia
Alans
Roxolani
Caspian Sea
Huns
Gaul
EUROPE
Roman Empire
Dacia
Black Sea
Aral Sea
Huns
Italy
Hispania
Armenia
Crete
Mediterranean Sea
Cyprus
Mauretania
ASIA
Han Empire of China
Parthian Empire
Tibetans
Egypt
ARABIA
Kushan Empire
Tibetan Plateau
East China Sea
Himyar
Qataban
INDIA
AFRICA
Andhra
Kingdom of Meroe
Hadramawt
Arabian Sea
South China Sea
Bay of Bengal
Kingdom of Axum

UNIT 1

Forming the First Civilizations

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1
From the Stone Age to Civilization: What Was the Price?

Modern human beings (*Homo sapiens* or "wise man") are today the sole surviving representatives of a larger biological classification known as hominids. Almost every year, scientists announce a new discovery that extends knowledge of our hominid ancestors further into the past. According to DNA analysis, the hominids branched off from the apes at least 5 million years ago. The oldest known hominid fossils have been dated to 3.9 million years ago. At least 2 million years ago, the earliest biological human beings, known as *Homo erectus* ("upright man"), appeared in Africa.

What distinguishes a human being? Intellectually, it is the ability to think in abstract ways, to use language, to understand that one has a personality, to recall the past, and to plan for the future. In material terms it is the ability to make tools, to build fires, and to leave evidence of paintings or carvings. These abilities did not appear at once—in fact, they probably were not completely evolved until about 100,000 years ago, with the appearance on earth of *Homo sapiens*. But the earliest signs of such development can be traced back some 2.5 million years to the earliest toolmakers, whose material traces have recently been found in Ethiopia (selection 1).

The readings in this chapter will take you from these earliest known prehuman toolmakers to the dawn of what we call civilized life, about 5,500 years ago. That journey covers a huge span of time, and for most of that time change occurred very slowly. Think of the 2.5 million years that have passed since the earliest toolmakers fashioned their crude implements as a single twenty-four-hour day that runs from midnight to midnight. In that imaginary day, *Homo sapiens* would not appear until about 11 P.M., the eve of civilization not until 11:55 P.M. The entire history of the world since then would speed by in the last five minutes!

Historians call the enormous period from the first toolmakers to the appearance of civilization the Stone Age, subdivided into the Old Stone Age (or Paleolithic) and the New Stone Age (Neolithic). The Old Stone Age designates the period in which human beings depended on relatively crude stone tools and weapons and lived as wandering bands of hunter-gatherers. It was in the Neolithic, which

began (in some parts of the world) about ten thousand years ago, that human beings experienced those crucial revolutions that made civilization possible: They discovered agriculture; learned to raise animals for food, for power, and for transportation; made tools and weapons from finely worked stone; and began to live in settled villages and to channel water to irrigate their crops. Eventually they discovered how to smelt metals (especially copper) and began to live in cities that were fed by surrounding villages. Between 4000 and 3000 B.C., in present-day Iraq, human life had become so closely organized that historians speak of the patterns of life there as constituting a civilization. For these people, the Neolithic had ended and the age of civilization—in which we ourselves live—had begun. (In some parts of the world, such as the Amazon basin, New Guinea, and the deserts of southern Africa and Australia, the Stone Age way of life has continued into the twentieth century, and remnants of it still survive.)

What was gained, and what was lost, in this transition from the Stone Age to civilization? How have human beings learned to master their environment, and in what ways have they remained dependent on nature? What forms of cooperation have they had to learn? How have differences of wealth and power arisen as civilized life became more complex? And how have human beings explained their place in the world?

Think about these questions as you study the six selections that follow, and indeed throughout this book.

SELECTION 1:

The Oldest Tools

In the following selection, a contemporary anthropologist describes the discoveries that have extended our knowledge of toolmaking by hominids to 2.5 million years ago, and tells us something of how these creatures lived. From this selection you will also learn about how modern scientists investigate humanity's ancestors.

Modern human technology had humble beginnings. The earliest signs of this are the ability to select a suitable pebble from a stream bed, and to strike it with an appropriate stone to produce either sharp-edged flakes or a crude chopping tool. Sileski Semaw and others present new evidence from Gona in Ethiopia which pushes the date for the onset of tool manufacture back to at least 2.5 million years ago. And in December 1996 in the

Bernard Wood, "The Oldest Whodunnit in the World," *Nature*, vol. 385, no. 6614 (Jan. 23, 1997), p. 292.

Journal of Human Evolution, Kimbel and others reported that at the nearby 2.3-million-years-old site at Hadar, similar-looking stone tools were found in "close association" with a jawbone from one of the earliest examples of the genus *Homo*. But how secure is the claim that hominid technology is so deeply rooted in the past, and how justified is the assumption that the first technologists were members of our own genus?

The assertion that stone-tool manufacture goes back 2.5 million years is based on evidence from the Gona River, which is in the Awash Valley in Ethiopia. The Awash Valley is best known for the collections of fossil hominids that have been found at Hadar, to the northeast of Gona, and at the Middle Awash, which is to the south. Thus far, work in the Awash Valley has concentrated on strata that are between 2.9 and 3.9 million years old. Although these efforts have yielded an impressive collection of an early hominid species known as *Australopithecus afarensis*, even after many years of field work there have been no signs of stone tools in these earlier strata.

There is no doubt that the two teams have recovered genuine and remarkably sophisticated artefacts. Of the several thousand tools that were discovered by Semaw at Gona, more than a thousand were found *in situ* at two excavations. Kimbel recovered a more modest haul from Hadar—just 34 artefacts—but 14 of these were from an excavation. The geological context of the artifacts at both sites is reassuring: at neither location is there any evidence that the tools might have been made more recently and then deposited in the beds of stream channels that had cut into the older layers. The sediments are too fine-grained to be channel deposits, and the edges on the tools are fresher than they would have been if they had been rolled in stream beds. Stone-on-stone percussion can occur naturally, but it is inconceivable that random impacts could mimic the uniform flaking patterns of many of these artefacts.

Archaeologists use the term 'industry' for distinctive collections of stone tools, and both the Gona and the Hadar artefacts have been assigned to the 'Oldowan industry'. This was the name given by Mary Leakey to the 1.8 million-year-old stone tools that she recovered from Bed I at Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania. Oldowan-like artefacts have been found at sites elsewhere, but until the new discoveries at Gona, the earliest evidence came from the Lokalalei site at West Turkana which, like at Hadar, is around 2.3 million years old.

Stone tools of this antiquity cannot be dated directly—their ages have to be inferred from the strata that contain them. Semaw used two dating methods and they relied on the ability to trace distinctive, reliably dated, strata from site to site and from one locality to another. A stratum below the two excavations is apparently equivalent to the tuff-derived layer from Hadar, and single-crystal argon/argon dates confirmed that it results from a volcanic eruption that took place around 2.9 million years ago.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. How convincing is the evidence that the artifacts discovered in the Awash Valley were really made by early hominids?
2. What can you deduce from this evidence about the way of life and level of intelligence of early hominids?
3. What other kinds of evidence might scientists be able to find that could tell us more about the early hominids? What kinds of evidence are likely to have been lost forever?

SELECTION 2:

Tracing the Past Through DNA

Archaeology is not the only way we have of gaining insights into earliest human history. DNA, the biochemical substance that is present in all living things and carries the genetic code, has certain unique characteristics shared by each member of a given genus (for example, Homo*) or species (for example,* Homo sapiens*). Recently developed procedures enable scientists to analyze the rate of evolutionary change in DNA, and thus to establish an approximate date for its separation from its biological relatives as described in the following selection. Such analysis throws startling light on the emergence of modern human beings, although conclusions based on it thus far remain highly controversial.*

Since the 19th century, scientists have been studying fossils to reconstruct our past. But there was no evidence to tell them definitely whether these represented our direct ancestors or were merely dead branches on the family tree. So scientists did the logical thing. They arranged them with the oldest and most dissimilar hominids first, leading up to the most recent and close-to-human types. It was a convenient time line, familiar from textbook illustrations and museum dioramas. And then came Eve.

She debuted before the world in the winter of 1988: a naked woman holding an apple on the cover of *Newsweek*. The article explained that a team of biochemists at Berkeley had discovered the single female ancestor of the entire human race. The scientists, led by Rebecca Cann, had done so by looking at the DNA found in a specific part of the cell called the mitochondria. Unlike other DNA, mitochondrial DNA isn't a combination of both parents' genes; it is inherited only from the mother. This means that the only changes to the mitochondrial genes, as they pass from generation to generation, are occasional mutations. By calculating the rate of these mutations, and comparing the mitochondrial DNA of people from around the world, the Berkeley researchers had come up with a surprisingly young common ancestress: Eve, as the scientists dubbed her, was only 200,000 years old. "Genetically speaking," writes James Shreeve in *The Neandertal Enigma*, "there was not all that much difference between a [modern] New Guinean highlander, a South African !Kung tribeswoman, and a housewife from the Marin County hills. . . . Whatever appearances might suggest, they simply hadn't had time enough to diverge."

The Eve discovery shocked evolutionary historians. It meant the hominids that spread out of Africa 1.2 million years ago were not modern humans' direct ancestors. Instead they and their descendants had been supplanted by a far more recent out-of-Africa migration—perhaps only 100,000 years ago. That would mean that all the old standbys of the museum diorama—Peking Man, Java Man, Neanderthal Man—were evolutionary dead ends.

Not surprisingly, traditional paleontologists have attacked Eve with vigor, arguing that Cann's sample was skewed, her computer program flawed, and that even if all humans share a recent female ancestor, it doesn't mean there weren't other contributions to our gene pool. Eve's partisans counterattacked: A number of independent

Adam Goodheart, "Mapping the Past," *Civilization*, vol. 3, no. 2 (March/April 1996), pp. 45, 47.

researchers have looked at different parts of the DNA and arrived at similar dates for our divergence from a common ancestor. In 1995, a geneticist at the University of Arizona claimed to have found a common male ancestor who lived 188,000 years ago.

Now scientists are trying to resolve the Eve debate by looking in the most logical place of all: ancient DNA. "If we had even one Neanderthal DNA sample we could be sure of, it would quickly emerge how closely related it was to modern *Homo sapiens*," says Sir Walter Bodmer, former president of the Human Genome Organisation. Just a few years ago, the idea of finding a sample of Neanderthal DNA would have seemed about as probable as the idea of finding a live Neanderthal living deep in some cave, since scientists believed that the fragile DNA molecule decayed rapidly after death. But now geneticists are reading DNA recovered from ancient human remains. Despite skepticism from many scientists, their results are winning acceptance. . . .

Our genes cannot wholly account for our diversity. In fact, the work of genetic historians would be far easier were it not for the fact that the peoples of the world are so similar under the skin. "It is because they are external that . . . racial differences strike us so forcibly, and we automatically assume that differences of similar magnitude exist below the surface, in the rest of our genetic makeup," [Luigi-Luca] Cavalli-Sforza has written. "This is simply not so: the remainder of our genetic makeup hardly differs at all." Indeed, research has shown that culture usually drives the spread of genes and not vice versa. "In the history of human development," Cavalli-Sforza says, "whenever there has been a major expansion geographically or demographically, it has been because one people has had an increase in food or power or transportation. . . . Whenever I see an expansion, I start looking for the innovation that made it." The invention of agriculture or the wheel makes history; genes only reflect it.

Even so, the story that the genes' tiny gradations tell is altering the way we think about the past. "Genetics changed something fundamental about our view of history," says Jones. "It shows us that history is largely the story of love, not war." The genetic historians suggest that it's time we started asking, with E.M. Forster: Who *did* go to bed with whom in the year 1400? And as we consider the possibilities—a Mongol chieftain and his Chinese bride, say; an Aztec woman and her husband; a fumbling pair of teenagers on a French hillside—it is pleasing to think that those ancient acts of love left their mark somewhere within each of us.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. In what ways does DNA analysis offer an unexpected and controversial explanation of the evolution of modern humans?
2. Why is DNA analysis controversial?
3. Do you find the analysis presented in selection 2 convincing? Why or why not?

SELECTION 3:

Tensions in the Neolithic

Most scholars regard the Agricultural Revolution—the process by which human beings learned to cultivate plants rather than simply gather their food from wild plants—as the single most important change in history. From this change flowed virtually everything else that has made the

society in which we live: food production sufficient to support growing populations, new gender relationships, the impetus to develop more efficient tools, villages and cities, trade and money, economic divisions into rich and poor, governments, wars, the leisure and money to support the arts. The list could go on and on.

But, as Professor D. Brendan Nagle of the University of Southern California argues in the following selection, there was a price for this progress.

Hunters and gatherers place a low value on possessions and a high value on mobility. Always on the move, they carry only a few tools and weapons with them. Agriculture reverses this way of life. It cannot be practiced without a commitment to permanence and the accumulation of large amounts of material goods. Homes, villages, and storage facilities have to be constructed; fields cleared, divided, and fenced; herds built up and maintained; and implements and tools fabricated. Constant effort is required to maintain all of these. Once settled, farmers may not move again for generations. Pastoralists are equally committed to their flocks and herds.

For practical purposes, hunting-gathering bands always remained small, in the range of approximately 30 to 50 people. Larger groups would have been difficult for most environments to sustain; smaller ones could not reproduce themselves. Agriculture, by contrast, knew no limits insofar as population growth was concerned. Thus where hunting-gathering bands restricted their numbers, agricultural communities tended to expand them. Children could be put to work in the fields or gardens at an early age, and at harvest time it was essential to maximize the number of people who could be mobilized. Overpopulation was solved by emigration and opening up new land for cultivation. By about 6000 B.C., villages with populations in the thousands were common throughout the Middle East.

The growth of population and the accumulation of material goods forever changed the way human beings lived. Under hunting-gathering conditions a rough egalitarianism prevailed; no one had—or needed—any more than anyone else. What was the point of accumulating things that could not be carried from place to place during long, nomadic treks? In the settled conditions of agriculture, however, this was not the case. Now there was a point—and an incentive—to expanding one's possessions, whether farm or flock. Wealth was its own self-evident justification. Material goods could be accumulated, enjoyed during one's lifetime, and then passed on to the next generation. With the Agricultural Revolution inequality became, for the first time, an aspect of the human condition since not everyone could be equally successful in the quest for material possessions.

The new way of life had a powerful impact on gender relations. With the introduction of agriculture, the role and status of women changed. It is estimated, for instance, that in some present-day hunting-gathering groups, women contribute over 70 percent of the daily food supply and as a result have a higher status than their counterparts in agrarian societies. In hunting-gathering bands children are usually spaced at three- to four-year intervals (by means of late weaning), whereas in agricultural societies women have frequent pregnancies and spend more time caring for small children. Finally, men dominate agriculture wherever it involves the use of the plow and herding. As their roles changed and as they lost the ability to contribute directly to the economic well-being of the community, the status of women declined.

Another factor contributing to this decline was the emergence of a form of public life. In hunting-gathering bands there was little need for the exercise of authority; everyone was related to everyone else, and everyone knew each other intimately. Conflicts could be resolved informally. This changed with the development of large villages where more formal and less personal methods of administering justice and maintaining

D. Brendan Nagle, *The Ancient World* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1989), pp. 4–6.

order became necessary. Men easily assumed the new roles of judges, which complemented their responsibility for defending villages from outside marauders and policing the more unruly members of the village community; the power of coercion and patriarchal control went hand in hand. The realm of justice, administration, and warfare was defined as an arena of public concern under male control in opposition to, and superior to, the private realm of the family and the household to which women, along with children, servants, and, for the first time, slaves were assigned. This distinction between public and private realms is a key to understanding all of ancient society.

The results of the Agricultural Revolution were thoroughly mixed. It is usually regarded as a great leap forward for humankind, as indeed it is if we focus only on its ability to provide large food surpluses and to create new and more varied jobs for men. But in other respects it posed challenges in terms of cooperation and the ownership of goods that have never been adequately solved.

Apart from its lowering of the status of women, the agricultural way of life created new stresses and tensions for everyone. Herds and farms had to be maintained; there could be no relaxation in that task. There were new sources of friction over boundary lines, possessions, and the equitable distribution of goods and responsibilities. Relations between men and women and between children and their parents changed. New relations between haves and have-nots, masters and servants, owners and nonowners, freemen and slaves, came into being. Warfare was now a much more serious business than in the past. There was now something worth fighting over beyond mere disputes about hunting territory. There was booty worth taking in the form of movable goods and people who could be put to work for their new masters. Herds and farms could be appropriated and their previous owners enslaved.

It is undoubtedly true that plain superiority in force allowed agriculturists to overwhelm hunting-gathering peoples everywhere in the world. It was not a peaceful process. Even when not in direct confrontation, agriculturists always encroached aggressively on the territories of hunters and gatherers. Rapid population growth was solved by the expedient of encouraging surplus population to move on—into the territories of hunters and gatherers. In all of the sustained confrontations between agriculturists and hunters and gatherers, the latter have always lost. Today, what was once the only way of life for the human race is practiced by a tiny and ever-shrinking percentage of people in the most distant and inaccessible parts of the globe. In the great sweep of human history the only two other events that can be compared to the Agricultural Revolution in terms of their capacity to revolutionize human relations are the State and Urban Revolution and the Industrial Age Revolution—the age in which we live.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What determined the size of hunting-gathering bands?
2. Contrast the life of the hunter with that of the farmer.
3. How did the agricultural revolution affect women?

SELECTION 4:

Farming

Learning how to grow plants for food was the crucial breakthrough; it affected every other aspect of Neolithic life. Many historians theorize that

women, who in hunter-gatherer bands bear primary responsibility for finding edible plants while the men are tracking game, played the largest role in perfecting the techniques of cultivation. As the clearing of fields and the growing of crops began to demand greater physical strength, and as hunting yields declined, men gradually took control of farming. In the following selection, American historian William McNeill explains some of the implications of Neolithic farming.

As to how farming was invented, we have to guess. The real breakthrough was the discovery of how to make seed-bearing grasses—ancestors of our wheat and barley—grow in places where they did not grow naturally. By preparing fields in forested land, where grasses did not ordinarily grow at all, people could plant suitable kinds of seeds and be sure that only food crops would grow. In such locations natural competitors (weeds) could not mix with and partly crowd out the seed-bearing wheat and barley because weed seeds could not easily pass through the forest barrier and establish themselves on the artificially cleared land.

The trick, then, was to be able to create at will special environments where useful plants could thrive. Men did this by cutting a ring of bark around trees of the forest. Slashing the bark killed the trees and opened the forest floor to sunlight. In such a specially prepared place, wheat and barley could grow very well indeed.

But before agriculture could flourish, still another change had to take place. When shaken by the wind or by some passing animal, wild wheat and barley scattered their ripe seeds on the ground. This made harvesting difficult. But human action soon selected strains with tougher husks, so that seed no longer shook out of the ripened ears, even when the stalks were grasped by human hands and cut with a sickle. After all, only those seeds that stayed in the ear could be carried home by the farmers, and only seeds that had been safely harvested could be planted the next year. Rapid selection therefore took place in favor of varieties that suited human needs.

After forest clearings had been cultivated for two or three years, the cultivators found it helpful to burn the dead tree trunks and scatter the ashes over the soil. This fertilized the ground for one or two more crops. But after five or six years such fields usually became choked with thistles and other weeds (whose seeds had come in on the wind), so that the soil was no longer worth cultivating. Instead, the early farmers killed the trees somewhere else in the forest and started the cycle of slash-and-burn cultivation all over again. Their old fields, abandoned, so filled with trees again.

The soft soil of the forest floor scarcely needed to be dug. A pointed stick to stir up the leaf mold and make sure the seeds were in contact with moist ground beneath was all that was necessary to make the seeds grow. Special sickles for cutting grain stalks had already been invented to aid in harvesting wild-growing grain. None of these implements required any fundamental change in tool types.

But cutting the bark around tree trunks was a different matter. An ax sharp enough to bite through into the wood, and tough enough not to shatter on impact against the tree trunk, demanded a different kind of stone from that used in making hunting tools. Arrowheads, knives, and spears could be made of brittle stone, for they were designed to cut soft animal tissues. They needed to be sharp, and even prehumans had discovered how to shatter a stone in such a way as to produce suitable cutting edges. But the techniques for shaping brittle stone would not do for an ax. Tough unchippable kinds of stones were needed to withstand the impact against a tree trunk. The problem was solved by grinding and polishing basalt and similar varieties of hard, dense stone.

Tools produced by this method look very different from those made by chipping brittle pieces of flint. Slow, patient work of grinding and pol-

William McNeill, *A History of the Human Community,* 4th ed., (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1993), pp. 10–11.

ishing the natural surfaces of the stone produced smooth, keen, cutting edges. Obviously this took much longer than chipping tools into shape; but a well-made stone ax might last a lifetime and could be resharpened over and over again in exactly the same way that it had been made in the first place. Such axes were quite efficient. Modern experiments have shown that, when put onto a proper handle, ancient stone axes can cut down a tree almost as fast as a modern steel-bladed ax.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. How does seed selection affect farming?
2. How did slash-and-burn agriculture get its name?
3. Why was the invention of the stone ax important for the first farmers?

SELECTION 5: Counting

Once there was an agricultural surplus and a need for storage, people had to devise a way to count the inventory and determine the amount of space needed. This very simple operation soon became more complex.

In Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq), where as we will see in chapter 2 the first genuine civilization appeared sometime between 4000 and 3000 B.C., large temple complexes were established that depended on collecting enough grain to sustain and satisfy the priests whose full-time job was to please the gods and interpret their wishes. These temples had rooms for storing food reserves and agricultural tools. Naturally, the scribes who kept the records had to learn how to count accurately.

Tally stones are one ancient method of aiding the memory while counting. While a herd of animals was being counted, for example, a stone was thrown on a pile or dropped into a container for every tenth or *x*th animal. By this method only the number can be fixed, and this only for as long as the stones or tokens are kept together. Every other aspect of the process, such as the kind of animals, the place, the time, or the people involved, must be obtained by recourse to the memory of the people taking part.

This system, whose "stones," already in earlier times—especially in Babylonia where there were no stones—had been made of clay and could thus easily be made into different shapes, was refined by having "stones" of different shapes represent different counting units: something numerous finds attest to. A further step was taken by shaping some of the pieces of clay to help one to recognize what was being counted. If such pieces of clay were kept together in containers, it was possible to carry out something like the simplest form of bookkeeping, although this clearly still meant going without a record of all the other important information involved.

The next step, shown by the material we have found, combined this token method and the system of cylinder seals, which had been set up in the meantime. The precise number of clay pieces collected together for a specific operation were now encased in a lump of clay that was molded into a ball, the outside of which was then covered

Hans J.Nissen, *The Early History of the Ancient Near East, 9000–2000 B.C.*, Elizabeth Lutzeier and Kenneth Northcott, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 85, 87.

with impressions, mostly from only one seal. In this way, two important further aspects could be recorded: (a) since it was possible to identify the seal of a particular person, it became possible to name those who took part in or were responsible for an operation; and (b) here, for the first time, there was a protection against manipulation. It must, however, be conceded that this method was exceedingly laborious, which meant that it was scarcely of use for all the operations involved in economic administration.

However, there is a direct line of development from here on, insofar as in some cases there are oblong impressions on the outside of such balls that represent numbers, to judge from further developments, and that were intended to make visible on the outside the numbers encased within the ball.

The next development is linked with this one because now, for the first time, we see the emergence of flat clay slabs with the oblong signs for numbers on their surfaces, which may be completely covered by impressions of cylinder seals. The same matters could now be dealt with in a much simpler way than with the use of the sealed balls. And there was an added advantage, which would later be one of the most important preconditions for the formulation of lengthier texts—with the help of simple incised lines such clay tablets could be subdivided into compartments, each of which could hold a different number. This meant that several operations could be recorded on one tablet. Obviously, what was actually being counted and the time, place, and so forth still had either to be retained in the memory or distinguished by the use of particular storage places for the tablets.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What steps were taken to make counting easier?
2. What other ways can you think of to make counting possible?
3. Where would the need for record keeping have been most urgent?

SELECTION 6:

Herding

Once men and women began farming, their gardens attracted animals. Young sheep and goats could easily be captured and kept as a handy source of meat. Keeping animals had another advantage , for sheep and goats can eat coarse grasses that humans cannot digest, thereby indirectly increasing the overall food supply. In the selection below, historian Charles Keith Maisels discusses how important the discovery of animal husbandry was for the Neolithic revolution.

Maintaining herds of wild animals may have been practiced very early on. The fact that among the bones found during excavations of the prepottery Neolithic period there are cases of definite concentration as regards the sex and age of the slaughtered animals of a particular type indicates that early humans had the sort of exact control of the animals' age and sex that it is impossible for hunters to have. After these early examples of keeping herds of wild animals, it probably took a

Charles Keith Maisels, *The Emergence of Civilization* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 24–26.

much longer time to arrive at some sort of planned breeding that aimed at more strongly reproducing characteristics of the animals useful to people.

An example is the development of the wool sheep, which differs in one important aspect from the wild sheep, namely in the type of coat. The wild sheep has a coat like a goat's, made up chiefly of long hairs, between which a light, woolly undercoat can be found. There are two different types of hair root that are responsible for this. Under normal conditions there are more roots for long hair, so that a thick coat of hair prevents the further development of the lighter covering of wool. But there is also a variant in which the relationship of the two different hair roots is reversed, enabling a thick pile of wool to develop unhindered by the hair. After a long interval, planned breeding of this variant finally produced the prototype of our present-day wool sheep.

Keeping herds of animals that will reproduce while they are in captivity requires great experience if the herd is to develop uniformly once the animals taken for human consumption have been removed, since a complex balance must be maintained between the sexes and age groups in any herd. There was also a great danger of things going wrong on another level. Apparently, the process of domestication led to animals becoming less resistant, and, to make matters worse, when they were being cared for by man in a herd, it was possible for more animals to live together in the open country than ever before. Epidemics could therefore spread much more quickly among the animals and have much more serious consequences, so that long years of work could be wiped out in a very short space of time. This must have had a critical impact on people who would have depended on animal husbandry as their only means of livelihood.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What is needed for the selective breeding of animals?
2. What is a major disadvantage of herding?
3. Why would some people prefer keeping animals to farming?

CHAPTER 2
Ancient Southwest Asia: How Did People of the First Civilization Understand Life, Death, and the Gods?

Civilization began in ancient Mesopotamia. For the first time in history, written documents rather than archaeological artifacts alone can be used to reconstruct the past. From about 3400 B.C., when cuneiform tablets first appeared, to the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C., Southwest Asia was almost always at the center of world history.

There are many reasons to explain this. First, it was here that the domestication of plants and animals allowed food surpluses to grow large enough to support increased populations. Men and women formed not only agricultural villages but also cities in the Tigris-Euphrates valley, wherever the soil was well watered either by natural springs or where there was ready access to the rivers once levies were cut into their banks. The people who inhabited these cities followed such specialized occupations as metalwork, weaving, carpentry, and performing religious rites. Kings with great powers appeared, financed public works, and with their civil servants and armies created a monarchical political system that produced the first law codes. Much attention went to irrigation projects, for access to water for farming was a matter of life and death.

Writers in ancient Mesopotamia wrote down the oral traditions of their people so that they should not be lost to memory. This literature encouraged men and women to think about the origins of humans and the purpose of life. As you read the selections that follow, try to imagine yourself back in the world of Mesopotamia during the third and second millennia B.C. and try to block out all that we, five thousand years later, have learned from modern science. What hopes and fears would you have had as an ancient Mesopotamian? How would your thinking be different from that of an intelligent person today? Do you think that ancient Mesopotamians were too pessimistic? What hope did their religion hold out?

SELECTION 1:

Thinking in the Ancient World

In the following selection, Henri Frankfort, a pioneering archaeologist who taught in both the United States and Great Britain during the mid–twentieth century, explains how ancient people viewed the world around them.

It is likely that the ancients recognized certain intellectual problems and asked for the "why" and "how," the "where from" and "where to." Even so, we cannot expect in the ancient Near Eastern documents to find speculation in the predominantly intellectual form with which we are familiar and which presupposes strictly logical procedure even while attempting to transcend it. We have seen that in the ancient Near East, as in present-day primitive society, thought does not operate autonomously. The whole man confronts a living "Thou" in nature; and the whole man—emotional and imaginative as well as intellectual—gives expression to the experience. All experience of "Thou" is highly individual; and early man does, in fact, view happenings as individual events. An account of such events and also their explanation can be conceived only as action and necessarily take the form of a story. In other words, the ancients told myths instead of presenting an analysis or conclusions. We would explain, for instance, that certain atmospheric changes broke a drought and brought about rain. The Babylonians observed the same facts but experienced them as the intervention of the gigantic bird Imdugud which came to their rescue. It covered the sky with the black storm clouds of its wings and devoured the Bull of Heaven, whose hot breath had scorched the crops.

In telling such a myth, the ancients did not intend to provide entertainment. Neither did they seek, in a detached way and without ulterior motives, for intelligible explanations of the natural phenomena. They were recounting events in which they were involved to the extent of their very existence. They experienced, directly, a conflict of powers, one hostile to the harvest upon which they depended, the other frightening but beneficial: the thunderstorm reprieved them in the nick of time by defeating and utterly destroying the drought.

The images had already become traditional at the time when we meet them in art and literature, but originally they must have been seen in the revelation which the experience entailed. They are products of imagination, but they are not mere fantasy. It is essential that true myth be distinguished from legend, saga, fable, and fairy tale. All these may retain elements of the myth. And it may also happen that a baroque or frivolous imagination elaborates myths until they become mere stories. But true myth presents its images and its imaginary actors, not with the playfulness of fantasy, but with a compelling authority. It perpetuates the revelation of a "Thou."

The imagery of myth is therefore by no means allegory. It is nothing less than a carefully chosen cloak for abstract thought. The imagery is inseparable from the thought. It represents the form in which the experience has become conscious. . . .

Our view of causality, then, would not satisfy primitive man, because of the impersonal character of its explanations. It would not satisfy him, moreover, because of its generality. We understand phenomena, not by what makes them peculiar, but by what makes them manifestations of

H. Frankfort et al., *Before Philosophy* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1951), pp. 14–15, 24–25.

general laws. But a general law cannot do justice to the individual character of each event. And the individual character of the event is precisely what early man experiences most strongly. We may explain that certain physiological processes cause a man's death. Primitive man asks: Why should *this* man die *thus* at *this* moment? We can only say that, given these conditions, death will always occur. He wants to find a cause as specific and individual as the event which it must explain. The event is not analysed intellectually; it is experienced in its complexity and individuality, and these are matched by equally individual causes. Death is *willed*. The question, then, turns once more from the "why" to the "who," not to the "how."

This explanation of death as willed differs from that given a moment ago, when it was viewed as almost substantialized and especially created. We meet here for the first time in these chapters a curious multiplicity of approaches to problems which is characteristic for the mythopoeic mind. In the Gilgamesh Epic death was specific and concrete; it was allotted to mankind. Its antidote, eternal life, was equally substantial; it could be assimilated by means of the plant of life. Now we have found the view that death is caused by volition. The two interpretations are not mutually exclusive, but they are nevertheless not so consistent with each other as we would desire. Primitive man, however, would not consider our objections valid. Since he does not isolate an event from its attending circumstances, he does not look for one single explanation which must hold good under all conditions.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What are the differences in thinking between the ancient and modern worlds?
2. Why was storytelling or myth making important to people in ancient times?
3. Why does the author argue that imagery was a reality for ancient men and women? Why were generalities avoided?

SELECTION 2:

The Mesopotamian Myth of Creation

One of the earliest attempts to tell how the world began is written on a Mesopotamian clay tablet called the Enuma Elish *(a translation of its opening words: "When above . . ."). In the form in which we now possess it, the* Enuma Elish *dates from between 1550 and 1150 B.C., but the ideas that it expresses are much older. Describing how the gods and the earth originally arose out of a watery chaos before the beginning of time, the* Enuma Elish *was publicly chanted at the beginning of each year by Mesopotamian priests. Two of the earliest myths in world literature, contained in the* Enuma Elish, *tell how the original gods were created out of the mingling of freshwater* (apsu), *saltwater, and clouds.*

When above the heaven had not (yet) been named,
(And) below the earth had not (yet) been called by a name;
(When) Apsû primeval, their begetter,
Mummu, (and) Ti'âmat, she who gave birth to them all,
(Still) mingled their waters together,
And no pasture land had been formed (and) not (even) a reed marsh was to be seen;
When none of the (other) gods had been brought into being,
(When) they had not (yet) been called by (their) name(s, and their) destinies had not (yet) been fixed,
(At that time) were the gods created within them.

[And a related myth goes on to explain:]

A holy house, a house of the gods in a holy place, had not been made;
A reed had not come forth, a tree had not been created;
A brick had not been laid, a brick mold had not been built;
A house had not been made, a city had not been built;
A city had not been made, a living creature had not been placed (therein);
Nippur had not been made, Ekur had not been built;
Uruk had not been made, Eanna had not been built;
The *Apsû* had not been made, Eridu had not been built;
A holy house, a house of the gods, its dwelling, had not been made;
All the lands were sea;
The spring which is in the sea was a water pipe;
Then Eridu was made, Esagila (temple) was built.

Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 18, 62.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What did the *Enuma Elish* consider essential before creation could begin?
2. What can you learn about Mesopotamian architecture from these poems?
3. Why was naming things a part of the creative process?

SELECTION 3:

The Epic of Gilgamesh

The epic of Gilgamesh, discussed by Frankfort in selection 1, examines human mortality in one of the most popular myths of ancient Mesopotamia. The tale, possibly Sumerian or Akkadian in origin, was translated into several other languages of the ancient world: Hittite, Hurrian, and Babylonian. The written composition dates from between 2000 and 1000 B.C., but its oral form is centuries older.

Gilgamesh, a Mesopotamian king (who really did exist in the third millennium B.C.), had in the epic a wonderful friend whose death caused him much grief. For this reason he set off to find the source of immortality from Utnapishtim, the survivor of the flood that once destroyed much of human life. The following selection tells of the failure of Gilgamesh to reach his

goal and of his carelessness, which allowed the serpent to become immortal rather than humans. Utnapishtim narrates.

"Gilgamesh, I shall reveal a secret thing, it is a mystery of the gods that I am telling you. There is a plant that grows under the water, it has a prickle like a thorn, like a rose; it will wound your hands, but if you succeed in taking it, then your hands will hold that which restores his lost youth to a man."

When Gilgamesh heard this he opened the sluices [obstructions to stop the flow of water] so that a sweet-water current might carry him out to the deepest channel; he tied heavy stones to his feet and they dragged him down to the water-bed. There he saw the plant growing; although it pricked him he took it in his hands; then he cut the heavy stones from his feet, and the sea carried him and threw him on to the shore. Gilgamesh said to Urshanabi the ferryman, "Come here, and see this marvelous plant. By its virtue a man may win back all his former strength. I will take it to Uruk of the strong walls; there I will give it to the old men to eat. Its name shall be *The Old Men Are Young Again;* and at last I shall eat it myself and have back all my lost youth." So Gilgamesh returned by the gate through which he had come, Gilgamesh and Urshanabi went together. They traveled their twenty leagues and then they broke their fast; after thirty leagues they stopped for the night.

Gilgamesh saw a well of cool water and he went down and bathed; but deep in the pool there was lying a serpent, and the serpent sensed the sweetness of the flower. It rose out of the water and snatched it away, and immediately it sloughed its skin and returned to the well. Then Gilgamesh sat down and wept, the tears ran down his face, and he took the hand of Urshanabi; "O Urshanabi, was it for this that I toiled with my hands, is it for this I have wrung out my heart's blood? For myself I have gained nothing; not I, but the beast of the earth has joy of it now. Already the stream has carried it twenty leagues back to the channels where I found it. I found a sign and now I have lost it. Let us leave the boat on the bank and go."

N.K. Sandars, ed., *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (London: Penguin Books, 1971), pp. 116–17.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. Where did Gilgamesh go in search of the plant that would give immortality?
2. Why did Gilgamesh want to bring back the plant to Uruk?
3. Does Gilgamesh seem angry or resigned about the loss of the plant? Why might ancient people attribute immortality to the serpent?

SELECTION 4:

Creation in the Book of Genesis

The beginnings of humanity were of great interest to people in the ancient world. Both Mesopotamians and Egyptians had creation stories, but none can match the account portrayed in the Hebrew Scriptures, telling of

Adam and Eve. Probably written down in the eighth century B.C., the Adam and Even story was part of earlier oral traditions. There are two creation accounts in the Bible's first book, Genesis. The first account portrays God effortlessly making the world in six days, then resting on the seventh. The author calls God Yahweh, so Scripture scholars call this the Yahwist version. The second author, known as the Elohist because he uses the name "Lord God" (Elohim) for the Creator, tells of Adam (in Hebrew the word for man) and Eve (life) as well as explains how evil came into the world.

When the Lord God made earth and heaven, there was neither shrub nor plant growing wild upon the earth, because the Lord God had sent no rain on the earth; nor was there any man to till the ground. A flood used to rise out of the earth and water all the surface of the ground. Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Thus the man became a living creature. Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden away to the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. The Lord God made trees spring from the ground, all trees pleasant to look at and good for food; and in the middle of the garden he set the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

There was a river flowing from Eden to water the garden, and when it left the garden it branched into four streams. The name of the first is Pishon; that is the river which encircles all the land of Havilah, where the gold is. The gold of that land is good; bdellium and cornelians are also to be found there. The name of the second river is Gihon; this is the one which encircles all the land of Cush. The name of the third is Tigris; this is the river which runs east of Asshur. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and care for it. He told the man, "You may eat from every tree in the garden, but not from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; for on the day that you eat from it, you will certainly die." Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will provide a partner for him." So God formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of heaven. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. Thus the man gave names to all cattle, to the birds of heaven, and to every wild animal; but for the man himself no partner had yet been found. And so the Lord God put the man into a trance, and while he slept, he took one of his ribs and closed the flesh over the place. The Lord God then built up the rib, which he had taken out of the man, into a woman. He brought her to the man, and the man said:

> Now this, at last—
> bone from my bones,
> flesh from my flesh!—
> this shall be called woman,
> for from man was this taken.

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and the two become one flesh. Now they were both naked, the man and his wife, but they had no feeling of shame towards one another.

The serpent was more crafty than any wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Is it true that God has forbidden you to eat from any tree in the garden?" The woman answered the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, except for the tree in the middle of the garden; God has forbidden us either to eat or to touch the fruit of that; if we do, we shall die." The serpent said, "Of course you will not die. God knows that as soon as you eat it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods knowing both good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good to eat, and that it was pleasing to the eye and tempting to

Genesis 2:5–3:7, The New English Bible with the Apocrypha (Oxford and Cambridge: University Press, 1970), pp. 2–4.

contemplate, she took some and ate it. She also gave her husband some and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they discovered that they were naked; so they stitched figleaves together and made themselves loincloths.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What does the Elohist creation account have in common with those of Mesopotamia? What is unique?
2. Why would Adam and Eve desire the knowledge of good and evil?
3. How does the role of the woman figure in this creation account?

SELECTION 5:

A Modern Commentary on Genesis

A modern author, Jack Miles, describes his understanding of this portrait of human origins in the Book of Genesis:

The second account of creation—which, in a continuous reading, is, of course, the sequel rather than an alternative to the first account—shows a narrowing of the focus and a heightening of the tension between creator and human creature. Mankind is no longer situated on "the earth" as a gigantic natural paradise in which to be fertile and increase but only in "a garden in Eden, in the east," which God has planted and given to "the man" to till and tend. And the free mastery that mankind was to exercise as God's image is also restricted: "Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat; but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it; for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die."

In the first account of creation, something is commanded but nothing is forbidden. Now, for the first time, there is a prohibition. It seems to be imposed in man's interest, but we wonder: If the man is to master the earth (recalling the first account of creation), why may he not be allowed the knowledge of good and evil? The man is offered no motive for his obedience other than one that makes no sense. And the Lord God in this second creation story seems noticeably more anxious in confrontation with his creature than God seemed in the first.

The air of anxiety grows more acute when the Lord God creates woman. In context, this second account of that event reads like the story of what really happened on the sixth day, an explanation of why God, in the first account, did not "see that they were good." The Lord God, unlike God, does not see the man as good even by inclusion. No, something is wrong with the man, and of the flaw the Lord God can only say: "It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a fitting helper for him." But all the Lord God's efforts to come up with an adequate helper fail. He brings to the man "all the wild beasts and all the birds of the sky," an extraordinary parade, and allows the man the power-laden privilege of naming them, but "no fitting helper [is] found." By clear implication, the man rejects the whole of God's labors in creating other living creatures: They may be "good," but they are not good for him. The Lord

Jack Miles, *God: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1995), pp. 30–32.

God, now genuinely laboring, driven to an extreme expedient, creates a woman from one of the man's ribs.

The man, in the first words in the Bible spoken by a human being, acclaims her with joy but without expressing any gratitude or otherwise acknowledging the Lord God. . . .

In the first account of creation, the male and the female also say nothing in response to the God who has created them, but for his part God seems to expect nothing. His only expectation is that they should be, fruitfully, themselves, subduing the earth and serving, thereby, as his image. The first creation story thus contains no story whatsoever of human transgression.

How very different the expanded second account. . . .

When the serpent tells the woman that, contrary to what the Lord God said, she will not die if she eats of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the serpent is telling the truth. She and the man do not die when they break the Lord God's command; certainly, they do not die, as the Lord God had warned, "as soon as you eat of it." Is the serpent's ability to foil the Lord God's plan a reflection of the Lord God's power? Is the serpent his rival? Or is the entire temptation episode, as we might put it, a setup? Is the serpent the Lord God's secret or unwitting agent?

One may escape all these difficulties and preserve the serpent's role as a deceiver by arguing that the couple did indeed die at once but that theirs was a spiritual rather than a physical death. This is the classic theological interpretation of "the fall of man," the "original sin." However, as we shall see again and again, the narrative we are reading is not much given to spiritualized or purely symbolic meanings but is extremely fond of deception stories of all kinds. Rather than eliminate the conflict by spiritualizing the threatened death or rationalizing the apparent deceit, we may trace the conflict back to the Lord God, a cause of both weal and woe in the lives of his creatures because good and evil impulses conflict within his character.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. Why does tension enter into the Elohist creation account?
2. How does Miles understand the role of the serpent?
3. What justification might there be for considering the Elohist creation story the basis for the Christian belief in original sin?

SELECTION 6:

Laws from Hammurabi's Code

Once the city-states of Mesopotamia took shape in the third millennium B.C., a political organization followed. At first it appears that a city assembly held power, but as constant conflicts over land and water rights became the norm, so too did the emergence of a single ruler, probably the commander of the army. Among his other tasks was the need to settle disputes and prescribe laws for the good order of the state. Because society was now more stratified and private property more common, the law required more detail.

One of the oldest codes, and surely the most famous, is that composed by Hammurabi, a Babylonian ruler of the 1700s B.C. The code was writ-

ten on a large black stele, or monument, now kept in the Louvre in Paris, France. Its second law specified a trial by water, thought to be a pure substance; an accused who floated (i.e., was rejected) when thrown into the water was presumed guilty. This form of water trial lasted until A.D. 1700 in European society. The original English translation of this text uses the word seignior, *a person in the upper or middle class, which is translated as* person *in the document below.*

1. If a [person] accuses a(nother) [person] and brings a charge of murder against him, but has not proved it, his accuser shall be put to death.

2. If a [person] brings a charge of sorcery against a(nother) [person], but has not proved it, the one against whom the charge of sorcery was brought, upon going to the river, shall throw himself into the river, and if the river has then overpowered him, his accuser shall take over his estate. If the river has shown that [person] to be innocent and he has accordingly come forth safe, the one who brought the charge of sorcery against him shall be put to death, while the one who threw himself into the river shall take over the estate of his accuser.

3. If a [person] comes forward with false testimony in a case, and has not proved the word which he spoke, if that case was a case involving life, that [person] shall be put to death.

4. If he came forward with (false) testimony concerning grain or money, he shall bear the penalty of that case.

5. If a judge gave a judgment, rendered a decision, deposited a sealed document, but later has altered his judgment, and others shall prove that that judge altered the judgment which he gave, then he shall pay twelvefold the claim which holds in that case. Furthermore, they shall expel him in the assembly from his seat of judgment and he shall never again sit with the judges in a case.

6. If a [person] steals the property of the temple or state, that [person] shall be put to death; also the one who received the stolen goods from his hand shall be put to death.

7. If a [person] has purchased or he received for safekeeping either silver or gold or a male slave or a female slave or an ox or a sheep or an ass or any sort of thing from the hand of another [person's] son or slave without witnesses and contracts, since that [person] is a thief, he shall be put to death.

8. If a [person] steals either an ox or a sheep or an ass or a pig or a boat, if it belonged to the temple (or) if it belonged to the state, he shall make thirtyfold restitution. If it belonged to a private citizen, he shall make good tenfold. If the thief does not have sufficient to make restitution, he shall be put to death. . . .

14. If a [person] has stolen the young son of a(nother) [person], he shall be put to death.

15. If a [person] has helped either a male slave of the state or a female slave of the state or a male slave of a private citizen or a female slave of a private citizen to escape through the city-gate, he shall be put to death. . . .

20. If the slave has escaped from the hand of his captor, that [person] shall (so) affirm by god to the owner of the slave and he shall then go free.

21. If a [person] has made a breach in a house, they shall put him to death in front of that breach and wall him in.

22. If a [person] committed robbery and has been caught, that [person] shall be put to death. . . .

128. If a [person] acquired a wife, but did not draw up the contracts for her, that woman is no wife.

129. If the wife of a [person] has been caught while lying with another man, they shall bind them and throw them into the water. If the husband of the woman wishes to spare his wife, then the king in turn may spare his subject.

Theophile J. Meek, "The Code of Hammurabi," in James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), vol. 1, pp. 166–167, 171.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. Do you think these penalties are too severe? Can you explain why they are severe?
2. Which law do you think is most just? Which do you think is most unfair?
3. How does crime and punishment in the modern world differ from ancient Mesopotamian practice?

CHAPTER 3
Egypt: How Did the Pharaohs Rule?

Chronologically, Egypt was the second of the world's great civilizations. More than five thousand years ago, the people who lived along the Nile were able, through much hard work, to clear the brush and drain the marshes along the riverbanks. The effort was worthwhile, for underneath the reeds and water lay extremely fertile black soil, washed down from the hills of eastern Africa. Moreover, the annual flood of the Nile deposited almost an inch of new topsoil on the fields near the river.

Villages appeared, then small towns, but never large cities. An entire range of social classes evolved; over time the larger and stronger village chiefs absorbed their neighbors' lands. Eventually, around 3200 B.C., there were only two rulers, one governing Upper Egypt (south of the Delta as far as the first cataract at Aswan) and one governing Lower Egypt (the Delta region). Even two proved to be too many; ultimately one dominated, under the title of pharaoh, which translates as "great house."

Over the decades the pharaoh became a divine figure, a god sent to rule the land of Egypt. Horus, the falcon god, had bestowed on him all power on earth. Without the ceremonies that he performed, Egyptians were sure that the world they knew would collapse in chaos.

How did the pharaohs rule, and why did the Egyptians accept their authority?

SELECTION 1:

The Life of a Pharaoh

The following selection, by a modern scholar, describes the pharaoh's surprisingly strenuous daily life.

The childhood of Pharaoh was happy and carefree. The ancient Egyptians loved children and allowed them great latitude. As a small boy the crown prince ran about naked in the sunshine with his small brothers and sisters, like the offspring of the humblest peasant. The child sported pretty ornaments and his head was shaven except for a single long side lock or Horus lock. As soon as he was old enough he was put in charge of a tutor, whose business it was to teach him reading, writing and the elements of arithmetic, architecture, astronomy and other arts and sciences with which he would later need a measure of acquaintance. Lessons were long and thorough.

Once the years of childhood were behind him the boy became rapidly aware of the onerous duties awaiting him when he grew up. During his adolescence he served an apprenticeship as an army officer, in company with the sons of noblemen and young foreign princes sent to Egypt to be educated. Under the Middle and New Kingdoms he took part in his father's campaigns or undertook campaigns of his own. He made frequent hunting expeditions, for male royalty set great store by regular massacres of animals and game. Forays were made into the desert to track down the rarer sorts of beast, which were dispatched with spear or bow, on foot or from a chariot. Regular military tournaments were held at which royal princes were expected to display exceptional skill with weapons and as charioteers.

The future Pharaoh was married in childhood to the most suitable of his small sisters, half-sisters or cousins. When he was a man he was permitted to take as many additional wives and mistresses as he desired, but it was essential that his immediate heir should possess the strongest possible strain of royal blood. The spiritual potency of the king, on which the well-being of his subjects depended, was enhanced by the purity of his breeding. Theoretically the actual blood of the sun god had been transmitted by Horus into the royal veins. The priesthood took this conception very seriously. It frowned upon any watering down of the divine ichor in the Pharaonic blood-vessels by marriages outside the royal family. To safeguard the purity of the succession it was advisable that the king should procreate as many children as possible within what is called the forbidden degree. To this end he not infrequently married his own daughters. . . .

His word was literally law. Justice was defined as "what Pharaoh loves," wrongdoing as "what Pharaoh hates." The king's slightest word was oracular, his most trivial pronouncement was *ex cathedra* [had the force of law]. His rôle as secular ruler was inseparably combined with his rôle as god. He kept his people in good order by means of divine utterance: his statements were statutes in themselves. In theory he directed every phase of secular and religious activity. He was at the same time high priest and chief justice. Whoever acted as priest or official throughout the land acted as his deputy. The Pharaohs were as a general rule very hard workers, and in the world of Oriental plot and counterplot in which they lived a sense of affairs came easily to them.

Although he was held to be "the divine man," in contrast to "the mortal man" or vizier, the king usually contrived to transact a vast amount of

J.E. Manchip White, *Ancient Egypt* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1970), pp. 14–17.

mortal business in a lifetime largely employed in elaborate ceremonial. Kings of weak character sometimes became complete prisoners of ceremonial, and indeed many of them appear to have succumbed to it. To survive the number of religious services the king was required to celebrate in the course of a single day called for a stout frame and a buoyant spirit.

It was the actual performance by the king of the daily liturgy that rendered efficacious the liturgies celebrated elsewhere in Egypt. In his legal capacity, the king was supposed to be accessible to all his subjects. He constituted a final court of appeal. The privilege of appeal to Pharaoh indicates his supremacy in the field of law, although it is doubtful whether many persons were possessed of sufficient temerity to bring their cases to his notice. Pharaoh remained a remote personage even in the comradely circumstances of a foreign campaign. The contemplation of this lonely and magnificent figure, burdened by the weight of his divine destiny, filled his subjects with dread. Approach to him was difficult. Perhaps no monarch in world history was so hemmed in by "the divinity that doth hedge a king." As crown prince he doubtless contrived to lead a reasonably entertaining existence, but once his brows were encircled by the sacred diadems, once he became a Horus upon his coronation day, he was a being dedicated and apart.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. Why was it important for the pharaoh to marry his relatives?
2. What role did ceremony play in the life of the pharaoh? Why?
3. What made the life of the pharaoh a lonely one?

SELECTION 2:

Thutmose III's Hymn of Victory

Invariably, pharaohs were the victors in the many inscriptions left in Egypt's temples. Along with a hieroglyphic narrative, a carving depicting the pharaoh defeating his enemies gave the illiterate a visual image of their ruler's greatness as commander of the army.

Thutmose III, who reigned from about 1490 to 1436 B.C., earned a reputation as an empire builder, extending Egypt's borders to include Palestine and Syria all the way to the Euphrates River. At Karnak, near ancient Thebes, he ordered the following hymn carved on the walls as a testament to his exploits. The setting of the hymn is the pharaoh's approach to the temple of Amon-Re, the patron deity of Thebes. The image of Amon-Re is brought before Thutmose, who then greets the god, adores his image, and tells the god how his fame has been enhanced, thanks to Thutmose's victories. Menkheperre was the pharaoh's official name.

Utterance of Amon-Re, lord of Thebes:
Thou comest to me, thou exultest, seeing my beauty,

J.H. Breasted, ed., *Ancient Records of Egypt,* 5 vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1906), vol. 2, pp. 263–64.

O my son, my avenger, Menkheperre, living forever.
I shine for love of you,
My heart is glad at your beautiful coming into my temple;
[My] two hands furnish your limbs with protection and life.
How pleasing is your pleasantness toward my body.
I have established you in my dwelling,
I have worked a marvel for you;
I have given to you might and victory against all countries,
I have set your fame, [even] the fear of you, in all lands.
Your terror as far as the four pillars of heaven;
I have magnified the dread of you in all bodies,
I have put the roaring of your majesty among the Nine Bows.
The chiefs of all countries are gathered in your grasp,
I myself have stretched out my two hands,
I have bound them for you.
I have bound together the Nubian Troglodytes by tens of thousands and thousands,
The Northerners by hundreds of thousands as captives.
I have felled your enemies beneath your sandals,
You have smitten the hordes of rebels according as I commanded you.
The earth in its length and breadth, Westerners and Easterners are subject to you,
You trample all countries, your heart glad;
None presents himself before your majesty,
While I am your leader, so that you may reach them.
You have crossed the water of the Great Bend of Naharin with victory, with might.

I have decreed for you that they hear your roarings and enter into caves;
I have deprived their nostrils of the breath of life.
I have set the terrors of your majesty in their hearts,
My serpent-diadem upon your brow, it consumes them,
It makes captive by the hair the Kode-folk,
It devours those who are in their marshes with its flame.
Cut down are the heads of the Asiatics, there is not a remnant of them;
Fallen are the children of their mighty ones.
I have caused your victories to circulate among all lands,
My serpent-diadem gives light to your dominion.
There is no rebel of yours as far as the circuit of heaven;
They come, bearing tribute upon their backs,
Bowing down to your majesty according to my command.
I have made powerless the invaders who came before you;
Their hearts burned, their limbs trembling.
I have come, causing you to smite the princes of Zahi;
I have hurled them beneath your feet among their highlands.
I have caused them to see your majesty as lord of radiance,
So that you have shone in their faces like my image.
I have come, causing you to smite the Asiatics,
You have made captive the heads of the Asiatics of Retenu.
I have caused them to see your majesty equipped with your adornment,
When you take the weapons of war in the chariot.
I have come, causing you to smite the eastern land,
You have trampled those who are in the districts of God's-Land.
I have caused them to see your majesty like a circling star,
When it scatters its flame in fire, and gives forth its dew.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What do you suppose compelled the pharaoh to boast of his victories?
2. Why does the pharaoh identify his victories with those of the god?
3. From studying this hymn, how would you characterize the style of pharaonic speech?

SELECTION 3:

The Great Pyramid

There is hardly anyone who, when thinking of Egypt, does not recall the pyramids. The great age of pyramid building occurred during the Old Kingdom, the first period of recorded Egyptian history, and the most impressive pyramids, those of Giza, date from about 2680 to 2350 B.C. To this day they remain the largest stone structures ever built on the earth. In the selection below, John A. Wilson, a leading American authority on ancient Egypt, explains how they were built.

In particular, the Great Pyramid, near the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty, is a tremendous mass of stone finished with the most delicate precision. Here were six and a quarter million tons of stone, with casing blocks averaging as much as two and a half tons each; yet those casing blocks were dressed and fitted with a joint of one-fiftieth of an inch—a scrupulous nicety worthy of the jeweler's craft. Here the margin of error in the squareness of the north and south sides was 0.09 per cent and of the east and west sides, 0.03 per cent. This mighty mass of stone was set upon a dressed-rock pavement which, from opposite corners, had a deviation from a true plane of only 0.004 per cent. The craftsman's conscience could not humanly have done better. Such cold statistics reveal to us an almost superhuman fidelity and devotion to the physical task at hand. Certainly, such exactness and conscientiousness were not characteristics of Egyptian builders in later times, who were frequently guilty of hasty, showy, but insecure construction.

The earliest dynasties constituted ancient Egypt's trial of strength and were the one period in which her physical achievements were marked by the greatest honesty and care. The several pyramids of the Third and Fourth Dynasties far surpass later pyramids in technical craftsmanship. Viewed as the supreme efforts of the state, they show that earliest historical Egypt was once capable of scrupulous intellectual honesty. For a short time she was activated by what we call the "scientific spirit," experimental and conscientious. After she had thus discovered her powers and the forms which suited her, the spirit was limited to conservative repetition, subject to change only within known and tested forms.

We of the age which glorifies progress to ever better forms and conditions may deplore such a slackening of spirit. But we must understand the ancient mythmaking mind, which sought security in arresting time by clinging to the divinely set origins and thus ignoring the future and which did not inquire too closely into the unknown because that belonged to gods rather than men. In that setting we should give all credit to Egypt's earliest achievements and to her success in working out forms which lasted for long centuries. After all, stability was what she desired, and she effected a culture which gave her satisfaction for some fifteen hundred years. . . .

A significant factor in the building of the pyramids was the lack of any such machines as we should consider essential for the movement of huge masses of stone. The missing element was the wheel, in a vehicle for the delivery of stone, in a pulley, or in a crane. Without wheeled carriages, pulleys, or cranes, how could they deliver heavy blocks into precise place at high elevations? They used sloping ramps of brick and

John A. Wilson, *The Culture of Ancient Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp. 54–55, 70–71.

earth, ramps which could later be destroyed. For the maneuvering of blocks, they had ropes, sledges, levers, and cradles, and they used a mortar of sand and gypsum as a lubricating medium, a slippery surface for the sliding of blocks into precise place. They enjoyed all the manpower which could be employed within any one space for any one operation. Above all, they took the needed time to do each little job with their "primitive" means: the calculation of a particular operation, the cutting and rebuilding of the ramp to deliver a five- or ten-ton block exactly, and the delicate measuring and cutting of stone for the most refined fitting. We moderns could duplicate their result with their methods, if we thought it worth while to use such limited resources and if we had the patience to undertake the task in terms of a lifetime.

The ancient engineer faced other unprecedented problems of stress. The pyramid form was ideal in overcoming some of the difficulties of great weight, built up to 480 feet and thus crushing downward with brutal mass. Burial chambers within a pyramid were successfully protected against the downward thrust of the mountain of stone. There was also consolidation inside the pyramid by "accretion faces," that is, solid retaining walls constructed in the form of a stepped pyramid and holding different segments of the structure in place.

Calculations were made in units of measurement originally of the simplest nature but formalized by this time into officially accepted standards, the royal cubit or forearm of 20.6 inches, subdividing into 7 palms or 28 fingers. In the Great Pyramid this unit provides us with good round numbers for major elements: 280 cubits for the height, 440 for a side of the base, 90 for the longest inner passage, and a burial chamber of $20 \times 10 \times 11$. What has been said about construction methods applies also to the mathematics with which the engineers made their calculations. There were two awkward factors. They added and subtracted as we do, but their multiplication and division used a process of doubling and doubling again as long as necessary, and then adding those pairs of numbers which came closest to the required factors.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. Why were the architects of the pyramids so precise in their construction?
2. What skills were demonstrated by the pyramid builders?
3. What effect would the building of the pyramids have on the Egyptian population?

SELECTION 4:

A Father Advises His Son

The pharaoh required a large corps of civil servants to run the country. Scribes were as important to the machinery of government as computers are in today's world. Any man employed in this position hoped his son would succeed him, for the many advantages of this occupation over most other employment were obvious.

In this text from the Middle Kingdom of Egypt, a civil servant who works as a scribe gives advice to his son as he begins his arduous training.

Beginning of the teaching
made by the man of Sile,
called Duaf's son Khety
for his son called Pepy,
while journeying south to the Residence [the palace school]
to place him in the scribal school,
in the midst of the children of the officials and the foremost of the Residence. . . .

"As for a scribe in any position in the Residence
he shall not be wretched in it."

He fills another's need; shall he not end up content?
I cannot see another trade like it,
of which those verses could be said.
I shall make you love writing more than your mother;
I shall present its beauties to you.
Now, it is greater than any trade.
There is not its like in the land.
When he was a child, he began to flourish;
he will be consulted, will be sent to do missions,
when he is not yet arrived at (the age to) wear a kilt.

I cannot see a sculptor on a mission,
nor a goldsmith being sent.
I have seen the metal-worker at his labour
at the mouth of his furnace,
his fingers like the stuff of a crocodile;
he stinks more than fish-roe.

And the barber is (still) shaving at evening's end.
To the town he takes himself;
to his corner he takes himself;
from street to street he takes himself
to search for people to shave.
He is vigorous with his arms to fill his belly,
like a bee which can eat (only) as it has worked.

And the gardener is bringing a yoke,
each of his shoulders weighted with age,
and with a great swelling on his neck,
which is festering;
he spends the morning watering the corianders,
and his supper is by the *Shaut*-plants,
having spent the midday in the orchard.
Because of his produce, it happens that he sinks down dying,
more so than (with) any other trade.

And the farmer laments more than the guinea fowl,
his voice louder than the raven's (?),
with his fingers made swollen
and with an excessive stink.
He is weary, having been assigned to the Delta,
and then he is in rags.

And the washerman washes on the shore,
and nearby is the crocodile.
"Father, I shall leave the flowing (?) water,"
say his son and daughter,
"for a trade that one can be content in,
more so than any other trade,"
while his food is mixed with shit.
There is no part of him clean,
while he puts himself amongst the skirts of a woman who is in her period (?);
he weeps, spending the day at the washing board.
He is told: "Dirty clothes!
Bring yourself over here," and the (river)-edge overflows with them.

The fowl-catcher, he is very wearied, gazing at the birds.
If the flocks of birds pass over him, then he says, "If only I had a net!"
God does not let this happen to him,
so that he is wearied by his state.

I will likewise tell you of the fisherman.
He is more wearied than (a man of) any other trade:
he who is a labourer in the river,
a consorter with crocodiles.
Even if the total of his reckoned (catch) comes to him,
then he is in woe:

R.B. Parkinson, *Voices from Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Middle Kingdom Writings.* Oklahoma Series in Classical Civilization (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), pp. 73–76.

doesn't he (then) say, "The crocodile's waiting!",
blinded by fear?
If he comes out of the flowing (?) water,
then he's as if smitten by god's might.
Look, no trade is free from a director,
except the scribe's: the director is him.

But if you know writings, it shall be well for you,
more than these trades I have shown you.
Look at them, at their wretchedness: none says to him
"A farmer, and a man". Take heed!
Look at what I have done in coming south to the Residence,
look, I do it for your sake!
A day in the school-room is excellent for you;
it is for eternity, its works are (like) stone.
The workmen I have shown you hurry by,
risen early and rebellious. . . .

Thank god for your father and your mother,
who put you on the path of life.
Look at these (maxims) I have put before you
and the children of your children.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What made the scribe so important in Egyptian society?
2. How did the life of a scribe bring with it special privileges?
3. If you lived in ancient Egypt, would the father's advice convince you to follow the scribe's vocation?

SELECTION 5:

Egyptian Women

Historians today are paying more attention to the position of women in past societies. In ancient Egypt, evidence suggests that women enjoyed a more favorable position than did their counterparts in other ancient societies. This selection, a brief essay by the Egyptologist and historian Peter A. Piccione from the University of Charleston, South Carolina, presents some tentative conclusions based on recent reexaminations of the available evidence.

In general, the work of the upper and middle class woman was limited to the home and the family. This was not due to an inferior legal status, but was probably a consequence of her customary role as mother and bearer of children, as well as the public role of the Egyptian husbands and sons who functioned as the executors of the mortuary cults of their deceased parents. It was the traditional role of the good son to bury his parents, support their funerary cult, to bring offerings regularly to the tombs, and to recite the offering formula. Because women are not regularly depicted doing this in Egyptian art, they probably did not often assume this role. When a man died without a surviving son to preserve his name and present offerings, then it was his brother who was often depicted in the art doing so. Perhaps because it was the males who were regularly entrusted with this important religious task,

Peter A. Piccione, "The Status of Women in Ancient Egyptian Society," 1995. On-line. Internet. Available at www.library.nwu.edu/class/history/B94/B94women.html.

that they held the primary position in public life.

As far as occupations go, in the textual sources upper class woman are occasionally described as holding an office, and thus they might have executed real jobs. Clearly, though, this phenomenon was more prevalent in the Old Kingdom than in later periods (perhaps due to the lower population at that time). In Edward Wente's publication of Egyptian letters, he notes that of 353 letters known from Egypt, only 13 provide evidence of women functioning with varying degrees of administrative authority.

One of the most exalted administrative titles of any woman who was not a queen was held by a non-royal woman named Nebet during the Sixth Dynasty, who was entitled, "Vizier, Judge and Magistrate." She was the wife of the nomarch of Abydos and grandmother of King Pepi II. However, it is possible that the title was merely honorific and granted to her posthumously. Through the length of Egyptian history, we see many titles of women which seem to reflect real administrative authority, including one woman entitled, "Second Prophet (i.e., High Priest) of Amun" at the temple of Karnak, which was, otherwise, a male office. Women could and did hold male administrative positions in Egypt. However, such cases are few, and thus appear to be the exceptions to tradition. Given the relative scarcity of such, they might reflect extraordinary individuals in unusual circumstances.

Women functioned as leaders, e.g., kings, dowager queens and regents, even as usurpers of rightful heirs, who were either their step-sons or nephews. We find women as nobility and landed gentry managing both large and small estates, e.g., the woman Tchat who started as overseer of a nomarch's household with a son of middling status; married the nomarch; was elevated, and her son was also raised in status. Women functioned as middle class housekeepers, servants, fieldhands, and all manner of skilled workers inside the household and in estate-workshops.

Women could also be national heroines in Egypt. Extraordinary cases include Queen Ahhotep of the early Eighteenth Dynasty. She was renowned for saving Egypt during the wars of liberation against the Hyksos, and she was praised for rallying the Egyptian troops and crushing rebellion in Upper Egypt at a critical juncture of Egyptian history. In doing so, she received Egypt's highest military decoration at least three times, the Order of the Fly. Queen Hatshepsut, as a ruling king, was actually described as going on military campaign in Nubia. Eyewitness reports actually placed her on the battlefield weighing booty and receiving the homage of defeated rebels.

The position of women in Egyptian society was unique in the ancient world. The Egyptian female enjoyed much of the same legal and economic rights as the Egyptian male—within the same social class. However, how their legal freedoms related to their status as defined by custom and folk tradition is more difficult to ascertain. In general, social position in Egypt was based, not on gender, but on social rank. On the other hand, the ability to move through the social classes did exist for the Egyptians. Ideally, the same would have been true for women. However, one private letter of the New Kingdom from a husband to his wife shows us that while a man could take his wife with him, as he moved up in rank, it would not have been unusual for such a man to divorce her and take a new wife more in keeping with his new and higher social status. Still, self-made women certainly did exist in Egypt, and there are cases of women growing rich on their own resources through land speculation and the like.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. Do you think that there was a connection between ancient Egypt's prosperity and women's social position there? If so, what might this connection be?
2. To what extent does the evidence suggest that it was upper-class—and not ordinary—women whose position was relatively favorable in ancient Egypt?
3. What evidence suggests that ancient Egypt was still a male-dominated society, despite the accomplishments of individual women?

SELECTION 6:

Archaeological Discoveries in Sudan

The history of sub-Saharan Africa begins in the region of the Sudan, with a kingdom known as Kush, or (an alternative name) Nubia. Like Egypt, Kush had the Nile to water its land, and because rain fell in this part of Africa, forests also existed, something unknown in Egypt.

In ancient times, therefore, Kush made very important contributions to Egyptian life. Trade between the two regions was brisk, for Nubian gold, hides, and recruits for the pharaoh's armies were much in demand. The Egyptians built forts in Nubia to control access to the Nile and were, during the New Kingdom, able to spread the Egyptian language south of Aswan. In the eighth century B.C., kings of Kush were sufficiently strong to invade Egypt and for several generations held control of the country. Unfortunately, much of the history of Kush remains unknown, for archaeologists are still uncovering the remains of these early African peoples. In the following selection, a modern archaeologist describes the excavations in the Sudan, at Napata, one of the centers of Kushite life in 663 B.C. after the Assyrians (conquerors from northern Mesopotamia) expelled the Kushites from Egypt.

Unfortunately the town of Napata has not been identified and though temples have been found on both sides of the river, there is no trace of domestic occupation. Remains of what may have been a palace and of store rooms suggest that the royal residence and the town of Napata may have been on the left bank, and that the area around Gebel Barkal on the other side of the river may have been reserved for the service of the gods. The presence of a great temple, and others discovered more recently by an Italian expedition, strongly suggests that this was so. A recent discovery, by an expedition from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston led by Dr T. Kendall, has shown that the famous hill of Gebel Barkal, below which lies the Amun temple, had a semi-detached pinnacle previously thought to have been a colossal statue but now known not to be. This pinnacle contains a small shrine cut into the rock which may have contained a statue of Taharqa and above it was found evidence that inscriptions with the name of Taharqa, and of King Nastasen (who lived three hundred years later), were carved in the rock and that a metal sheet, which the finder considers must have been of gold, was fixed there. Dr Kendall also suggests that the very noticeable pinnacle was regarded as a gigantic representation of the Uraeus, the cobra-head symbol of Egyptian royalty which was adopted by the rulers of Kush.

The development of a strong Egyptian influence in the culture of the Napatans is seen most clearly in the royal burial customs. Starting with a typically Nubian burial style the early rulers were buried under mounds with the bodies laid on a bed, similar to the *angareeb*, the standard

P.L. Shinnie, *Ancient Nubia* (London: Kegan Paul, 1996), pp. 100–102.

bed of the Sudan today, made of a wooden framework and a mattress of rope. The next stage was the use of mastabas to cover the burials, and then the kings were buried under pyramids which are, in their size and sharply pointed angle, certainly derived from those in use by private persons in the New Kingdom, as seen at Deir el Median at Thebes and, in Nubia, at Aniba. At these places they were not used for royal burials but for those of important non-royal personages.

The first king to be buried under a pyramid was probably Piankhy, though the destruction of the superstructure of his burial place makes it difficult to be certain that it was a pyramid and not a mastaba. A pyramid is likely and the later kings certainly seem to have been placed in tombs cut into rock under small pyramids. From this time on, at various places, all Napatan and subsequently all Meroitic royal burials were under pyramids and the bed burials of earlier times were replaced by the use of wooden coffins and in some cases of stone sarcophagi.

Other examples of Egyptian influence can be seen in the use of the Egyptian language, written in hieroglyphs, for royal inscriptions, though it is unlikely that Egyptian was the spoken tongue. Temples closely followed the patterns of Egyptian ones and were used for the worship of Egyptian gods, of whom Amun was the most important. A range of objects of Egyptian design have been found in the tombs. These may have been imported from Egypt or made locally either by groups of expatriate Egyptians or by local craftsmen trained to copy Egyptian styles. Since the earlier burials at Kurru are of Nubian style and it is only from the time of Piankhy that Egyptian ones begin to dominate, it can be supposed that it was the close connection with Egypt arising after Piankhy's invasion that was responsible for the change. . . .

After Taharqa, the Napatan kings never set foot in Egypt, but maintained a fiction of Egyptian kingship by using the titulary of the pharaohs. Of these kings some have left details of their activities in inscriptions written in Egyptian hieroglyphs. . . .

The history of Nubia during the time of the Napatan kings is based almost entirely on a study of royal burials and temples, and there is very little other archaeological material to give a more complete picture of the life of the time. Settlements have not been found and the only place where it is possible to see some of the indigenous material of the time is in the cemetery at Sanam. Here the burials fall into three different groups: the first being that in which the bodies were mummified and Egyptian or Egyptian-style objects were placed in brick-built chamber graves; the second contained extended burials in rectangular pits with Egyptian types of pottery; the third had contracted burials and contained, along with Egyptian pottery, vessels reminiscent of those of C-Group and Kerma times [earlier pottery traditions].

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What was the relation between Egypt and Kush?
2. How did the Kushite kings prepare for their burials?
3. Why was the example of Egyptian kingship so strong in Kush?

CHAPTER 4
Ancient India: How Did Aryan Conquerors Transform the Subcontinent?

The subcontinent of India produced the first civilization outside Southwest Asia and Egypt. Historians call it either the Indus Valley civilization (named for the river that provided its water) or the Harappan civilization (after its most prominent city, whose ruins are in present-day Pakistan). Exactly how this civilization arose is still uncertain, although many historians believe that the initial stimulus was the arrival of traders from Mesopotamia. We do not even know what these ancient Indians called themselves, or what language they spoke, for their writing, carved on seals, has not yet been deciphered.

Growing out of villages that date back to the third millennium B.C., the Indus Valley (or Harappan) civilization flourished for almost a thousand years, between about 2500 and 1500 B.C., until India was invaded by tribes speaking an Indo-European language or languages. (Indo-European is the language group to which most of the languages of modern Europe, the Caucasus, Iran, Afghanistan, and much of northern India and Pakistan belong.) These invaders were the Aryans. Their migration out of their original homeland, between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea in present-day southern Russia, was a widespread dispersal over most of Europe, Iran, and India. In India, the Aryan conquerors possibly destroyed the Indus Valley civilization and imposed certain cultural values, including the caste system, that have been basic to the Indian way of life ever since. As you read this chapter, ask yourself what evidence remains of the early Aryans' impact on Indian society and culture.

Despite flourishing for almost a thousand years, Harappa was in decline during the centuries before the Aryans overwhelmed it, for reasons unclear. Climate change may have been involved, causing deforestation, drought, and floods. When the Aryans charged into India from Iran, they reduced Harappa and the other Indus Valley cities to rubble.

SELECTION 1:

India's First Civilization

This selection, written by a modern archaeologist, takes us back to the ancient city of Harappa before the Aryan invasions. In several ways the Indus Valley civilization was unique. It extended over the largest area of all the very ancient civilizations: More than 150 widely dispersed sites of villages and towns have been identified. The Indus Valley people were great traders, sailing more than 800 miles down the Indus River and across the Persian Gulf to reach Mesopotamia. Its political chiefs were the first to plan cities, and its architects invented indoor plumbing. Its religious beliefs, after undergoing many later transformations, probably helped forge Hinduism, the dominant religion of modern India.

Based on the most recent work at the site, we know that the first settlers at Harappa established a small agricultural village on the edge of an oxbow lake near the ancient Ravi River around 3300 B.C. This location was ideal for agriculture as well as for access to rich hunting and fishing grounds. The earliest village occupation was characterized by small mud-brick buildings. Skilled artisans practiced a wide range of crafts: pottery making, copper and bronze working, and the making of exquisite ornaments from semi-precious stone and marine shell. As the settlement became more established, it also gained importance as a crossroads for trade between the highlands to the west and north and the vast alluvial plains to the east and south. Gradually, the village grew into a town, and eventually the town became one of the four largest cities of the Indus Valley civilization. . . .

The large urban centers of this civilization consisted of administrative, ritual, and residential buildings made primarily of baked brick and equipped with elaborate drainage facilities for removal of wastewater and rainwater. The people living in the cities developed extensive trade networks for obtaining raw materials and distributing foodstuffs and finished goods. Specialized technologies of metalworking, lapidary, and ceramics were perfected to make elaborate ornaments and specialized tools that were used locally or traded to distant lands. A highly standardized system of stone weights was developed for trade and possibly taxation. These weights were used in all the settlements of the Indus Valley, and many have been found at sites in Oman and even in Mesopotamia.

Texts from Mesopotamian cities state that "onions," cotton, hardwoods, pearls, carnelian, peacocks, and monkeys were imported from the land of Meluhha, which can be identified as the Indus Valley. The Indus cities in return obtained a range of goods that included raw materials, copper, gold, woolen items, and perfumes.

The ruling elites of the Indus cities developed a distinctive form of writing that was used on seals, trade goods, pottery, and even personal objects. This writing remains a mystery, even though careful archaeological studies are helping to develop a new understanding of how writing was used in the Indus Valley. However, because the writing has not yet been deciphered, it is extremely difficult to reconstruct accurately the economic, religious, or political systems of the Indus cities.

Most scholars agree that the Indus cities were

Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, "The Ancient City of Harappa," *Asian Art and Architecture*, vol. 9, no.1 (Winter 1996), pp. 86–89.

organized under some form of government that ruled over a vast hinterland through a combination of religious and economic control. There is little evidence of an extensive military establishment, and it is important to note that there are no representations in the archaeological record of people at war with each other. Surely there was conflict, and most of the cities were surrounded by massive mud-brick or stone walls for defense, but clearly the depiction of conflict was not something that was necessary to legitimize and augment the power of a ruler, as was the case in so many other societies.

The only context in which physical aggression is depicted is on seals or tablets that show a man fighting a wild animal, usually a bull or water buffalo. Several seals show a deity grappling with two tigers, while others depict a bull trampling a human. The depiction of struggle between people and wild animals is a theme that may stand as a metaphor of conflict between good and evil, or between civilized and wild.

Without written texts it is not possible to make specific interpretations of these narrative scenes or of the various other symbols used by the Indus people. However, there are strong connections between the art and technology of the Indus Valley civilization and the subsequent cultures of the Indian subcontinent. The concept of yoga is depicted on many Indus seals along with specific symbols that later are used in the iconography of Buddhist and Hindu ritual art: fish designs, swastikas, the stepped cross, and the pipal leaf design. Many of the technologies, such as bead making, shell working, glazed faience and terracotta ceramic production, metallurgy, and even architectural forms continue on into the later cultures of the subcontinent. The standardized system of weights established in the Indus cities reemerges during the subsequent Early Historic Period around 300 B.C. and continues to be used in traditional trading even today.

These strong continuities provide general models for interpreting the Indus culture, but the excavated cities of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, and numerous other sites, remain the sole source of information for reconstructing this ancient society.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. Why was the long-range trade of Harappa important for understanding the Indus Valley civilization's history?
2. What kind of historical evidence has been discovered at Harappa that cannot be properly interpreted until the ancient language of the Indus Valley is deciphered?
3. What elements of the civilization of the Indus Valley have been passed on to later Indian civilization?

SELECTION 2:

The Aryans Enter India

The Aryans who invaded India around 1500 B.C. were warriors whose highest value was martial prowess. Conquerors and destroyers, they left little record of their way of life except for their great epic poetry, which was kept alive for centuries by oral tradition before it was written down. These epics, and commentaries on them, constitute a foundation for all later Indian culture. In the following selection, a modern historian summarizes what we know about the early Aryans' conquest of India.

The story has been repeated for millennia, sung in temples, chanted in halls, told by words and actions of how a warrior people came out of the vastness of inner Asia through the passes of the northwest to fall upon the fortified cities of India and to conquer: riding horse-drawn chariots, driving herds of cattle, sheep, and goats, worshipping cosmic deities like Indra of the thunder and Agni of the fire, sacrificing, quarreling, gambling, drinking, singing, dancing—the Rig-Veda account of the Aryan tribes is one of the oldest epics in the world. It is part of an oral tradition which lies at the heart of Hinduism.

The Aryans were a pastoral people moving along routes already ages old, a people already affected by the sedentary world with which they were in contact even before arriving in India. They were organized into a rough class system headed by warrior chiefs whose rank was retained partially by accumulated wealth counted by herds and partially by prowess in battle. They spoke an Indo-European language and both by speech and cosmology were one with that group of pastoral nomads who inhabited the heart of the Eurasian continent in the early second millennium B.C. and whose later migrations so profoundly affected the ancient world.

After their conquest of the Punjab plain and the middle Ganges Valley, tradition has it that the settling-in process by which Aryan and non-Aryan people were integrated included the development and the change of the Aryan religious forms to more universal significance. The Brahmans explained the meaning and form of Vedic ritual, while the Upanishads philosophized and speculated upon them. It would seem that these later treatises were aimed at reinforcing the Vedic beliefs and rituals, which time and new environments were changing, and also at converting non-Aryan and presumably indigenous people.

The Mahabharata records a split between these kingdoms of the Aryans and an internecine strife that was climaxed in an epic battle in the central Ganges Valley in which the gods and men of many lands fought to the death. Afterward the victors seem to have settled in, with the broad reaches of the peninsula and the lower Ganges Valley yet before them. The Ramayana, in turn, tells of the kidnapping of Rama's wife Sita by Ravanna, a demonic king of Lanka (Ceylon), and her eventual rescue by Rama, aided by his ally Hanuman, the monkey king.

These two epics illustrate the spread of an essentially Indian tradition to south and east. As with the previous diffusion of traits from the west—hand axes, microliths, pastoralism, agriculture, bronze, etc.—the initiating ethos was now Indianized, that is, while still related generically to its origin, given peculiar character and suitability by its Indian environment. . . .

[The author then takes exception to this literary account, found in the four Vedas, the first records of the Aryans. The Doab is the region between the Ganges and the Yamuna Rivers in northern India.]

Yet the Aryan invasion is a literary account. It was probably not an invasion of hordes of Central Asian nomads who in great and overwhelming waves swept from the steppes to the Doab. It is more likely that Indo-European-speaking pastoral tribes of a variety of traditions and probably of a diversity of ethnic backgrounds gradually infiltrated the fertile plain from Peshawar to the Punjab. This pattern of movement is more characteristic of pastoral peoples than the great migrations historians are prone to dramatize. As pastoralists they may have established traditional seasonal routes but at least initially were unlikely to settle in large permanent sedentary settlements. Thus their traces archaeologically are less likely to be in terms of habitation and more likely to be necropoli or even isolated monuments. In the thickly settled Punjab of today traces of old campgrounds probably have long since disappeared, and it is only the more permanent settlements of a later stage which will be found.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What were the values held by the Aryan invaders of India?
2. What is the connection between

Walter A. Fairservis Jr., *The Roots of Ancient India* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 345–46, 358.

Aryan literature and the movement of people in India?

3. Why does the author argue that the Vedas are not always accurate?

SELECTION 3:

A Hymn to Indra and a Hymn to Agni

Selections A and B below are songs to Indra and Agni, the two most popular deities during the earliest period of the Aryan invasion. They were chanted by the Brahman priests to gain divine favor over their Dravidian enemies, the indigenous people of the country who may have been related ethnically to the Harappans. The first song portrays the battles as a cosmic struggle, a fight between Indra and Vritra, the primeval dragon. The second recognizes the need for Agni's help.

To Indra

I will declare the manly deeds of Indra, the first that he achieved, the thunder-wielder.
He slew the dragon, then disclosed the waters, and cleft the channels of the mountain torrent.
He slew the dragon lying on the mountain: his heavenly bolt of thunder Tvashtar fashioned.
Like lowing kine [cattle] in rapid flow descending the waters glided downward to the ocean.
Impetuous as a bull, he chose the Soma, and in three sacred beakers drank the juices.
The Bounteous One grasped the thunder for his weapon, and smote to death this firstborn of the dragons.
When, Indra, you had slain the dragon's firstborn, and overcome the charms of the enchanters,
Then, giving life to sun and dawn and heaven, you found not one foe to stand against you.
Indra with his own great and deadly thunder smote into pieces Vritra, worst of Vritras.
As trunks of trees, what time the axe has felled them, low on the earth so lies the prostrate dragon.
He, like a mad weak warrior, challenged Indra, the great impetuous many-slaying hero.
He, brooking not the clashing of the weapons, crushed—Indra's foe—the shattered forts in falling.
Footless and handless still he challenged Indra, who smote him with his bolt between the shoulders.
Emasculated yet claiming manly vigor, thus Vritra lay with scattered limbs dissevered.
There as he lies like a bank-bursting river, the waters taking courage flow above him.
The dragon lies beneath the feet of torrents which Vritra with his greatness had encompassed.

To Agni

Produce your stream of flames like a broad onslaught. Go forth impetuous like a king with his elephant; . . . after your greedy onslaught. You are an archer; shoot the sorcerers with your hottest arrows.

Your whirls fly quickly. Fiercely flaming

Ralph T.H. Griffith, F. Max Müller, and Herman Oldenberg, trans., *Rig-Veda, The Sacred Books of the East* (1897) quoted in Allie M. Frazier, ed., *Hinduism,* vol. 1 of *Readings in Eastern Religious Thought* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), pp. 75–76, 83–84.

touch them. O Agni, send forth with the ladle your heat, your winged flames; send forth unfettered your firebrands all around.

Being the quickest, send forth your spies against all evil-doers. Be an undeceivable guardian of this clan. He who attacks us with evil spells, far or near, may no such foe defy your track.

Rise up, O Agni! Spread out against all foes! Burn down the foes, O god with the sharp weapon! When kindled, O Agni, burn down like dry brushwood, the man who exercises malice against us.

Stand upright, strike the foes away from us! Make manifest your divine powers, O Agni! Unbend the strong bows of those who incite demons against us. Crush all enemies, be they relations or strangers.

He knows your favor, O youngest one, who makes a way for a sacred speech like this. May you beam forth to his doors all auspicious days and the wealth and the splendor of the niggard.

May he be fortunate and blessed with good rain, who longs to gladden you with constant offerings and hymns through his life in his house. May such longing ever bring auspicious days to him, O Agni.

I praise your favor; it resounded here. May this song which is like a favorite wife, awaken for you. Let us brighten you, being rich in horses and chariots. May you maintain our knightly power day by day.

May the worshipper here frequently of his own accord approach you, O god who shines in darkness, resplendent day by day. Let us worship you sporting and joyous, surpassing the splendor of other people.

Whoever, rich in horses and rich in gold, approaches you, O Agni, with his chariot full of wealth. You are the protector and the friend of him who always delights in showing you hospitality.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What images does the hymn use to describe the struggle between Indra and the dragon?
2. Can you find a comparison between the hymn to Agni and that of the Egyptian hymn to Amon-Re (chapter 3, selection 2)?
3. Why would these hymns have been composed?

SELECTION 4:

Caste in Ancient India

Essential to any understanding of the ancient Aryan society, as well as all of later Indian society to the present, is the notion of caste. (The word itself is Portuguese and means "race.") Caste defines a person's status in life, the occupation he or she must follow, and whom one may marry. In the following article the idea of caste is explored by Indian historian Romila Thapar. Dasas was the name the Aryans gave to the indigenous people of India against whom they fought.

When the Aryans first came to India they were divided into three social classes, the warriors or aristocracy, the priests, and the common people. There was no consciousness of caste, as is clear from remarks such as "a bard am I, my father is a leech and my mother grinds corn." Professions were not hereditary, nor were there any rules limiting marriages within these classes, or taboos on whom one could eat with. The three divisions merely facilitated social and economic organization.

The first step in the direction of caste (as distinct from class) was taken when the Aryans treated the Dasas as beyond the social pale, probably owing to a fear of the Dasas and the even greater fear that assimilation with them would lead to a loss of Aryan identity. Ostensibly the distinction was largely that of color, the Dasas being darker and of an alien culture. The Sanskrit word for caste, *varna*, actually means color. The color element of caste was emphasized, throughout the period, and was eventually to become deep-rooted in north-Indian Aryan culture. Initially, therefore, the division was between the Aryans and the non-Aryans. The Aryans were the *dvija* or twice-born castes (the first being physical birth and the second the initiation into caste status), consisting of the *kshatriyas* (warriors and aristocracy), the *brahmans* (priests), and the *vaishyas* (cultivators); the fourth caste, the *shudras*, were the Dasas and those of mixed Aryan-Dasas origin.

The actual mechanism of caste was not a formal division of society into four broad groups. The first three castes were probably a theoretical framework evolved by the brahmans, into which they systematically arranged various professions. Combinations and permutations within the latter were inevitable and were explained as originating in the inter-mixing of castes. The fourth caste, however, appears to have been based both on race as well as occupation (as was also the case later with the emergence of the out-castes, whose position was so low that in later centuries even their touch was held to be polluting).

The caste status of an occupation could change over a long period. Gradually the Aryan *vaishyas* became traders and landowners and the *shudras* moved up the scale to become the cultivators (though not in the condition of serfs). Aryan ascendancy over the Dasas was now complete. But although the *shudras* were permitted to cultivate the land, they were still excluded from *dvija* status, and were to remain so, an exclusion which prevented them from participating in Vedic ritual and led them to worship their own gods. This vertical division of society made it easier in later centuries to accept new ethnic groups. Each new group to arrive in India took on the characteristics of a separate sub-caste and was thereby assimilated into the larger caste structure. The position of the new sub-caste in the hierarchy was dependent on its occupation and, on occasion, on its social origins.

The establishment of caste was no doubt promoted by other factors as well, and the process by which the *shudras* became cultivators is inherent in these factors. With the transition from nomadic pastoralism to a settled agrarian economy, specialization of labor gradually became a marked feature of Aryan society. The clearing of the forests and the existence of new settlements led to the emergence of a trading community engaged in the supply and exchange of goods. There was thus a natural separation between the agriculturists, those who cleared and colonized the land, and the traders, those who established the economic links between the settlements, the latter coming from the class of wealthier landowners who could afford economic speculation.

The priests were in any case a group by themselves. The warriors, led by the king, believed their function to be solely that of protection, on which function the entire well-being of each community depended. The king emerged as the dominant power, and the warriors (*kshatriyas*) were therefore of the first rank in caste. The priests (brahmans) came next, followed by the more prosperous landowners and traders (*vaishyas*), and finally the cultivators (*shudras*).

The priests were not slow to realize the significance of such a division of society and the

Romila Thapar, *A History of India* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966), vol. 1, pp. 37–40.

tions of Vishnu. Arjuna must not be frightened of fighting his relatives and killing them, for this is not the end of their existence.

Our bodies are known to end,
but the embodied self is enduring,
indestructible, and immeasurable;
therefore, Arjuna, fight the battle!

He who thinks this self a killer
and he who thinks it killed,
both fail to understand;
it does not kill, nor is it killed.

It is not born,
it does not die;
having been,
it will never not be;
unborn, enduring,
constant, and primordial,
it is not killed
when the body is killed.

Arjuna, when a man knows the self
to be indestructible, enduring, unborn,
unchanging, how does he kill
or cause anyone to kill?

As a man discards
worn-out clothes
to put on new
and different ones,
so the embodied self
discards
its worn-out bodies
to take on other new ones.

Weapons do not cut it,
fire does not burn it,
waters do not wet it,
wind does not wither it.

It cannot be cut or burned;
it cannot be wet or withered;
it is enduring, all-pervasive,
fixed, immovable, and timeless.

It is called unmanifest,
inconceivable, and immutable;
since you know that to be so,
you should not grieve!

Bhagavad-Gita, Barbara Stoler Miller, trans. (New York: Bantam Books, 1986), pp. 129–30.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What qualities does Lord Krishna attribute to the self?
2. How does Krishna's statement encourage Arjuna to fight and, if necessary, kill his enemies?
3. Does Krishna's teaching have any relation to the caste system?

SELECTION 6:

What Is Reality?

Beginning about 600 B.C., a number of Aryan philosophers probed more deeply into the meaning of reality. Enlisting disciples who sat near them so as to be able to hear, they held forth on the essential nature of the visible universe. Their writings are known as Upanishads, the Sanskrit word that means "sitting near." (Sanskrit is the ancient Indo-European language of Aryan India.) This Upanishad is told in the form of a story about

supreme authority which could be invested in the highest caste. They not only managed to usurp the first position by claiming that they alone could bestow divinity on the king (which was by now essential to kingship) but they also gave religious sanction to caste divisions. A late hymn of the *Rig-Veda* provides a mythical origin of the castes:

> When the gods made a sacrifice with the Man as their victim. . . .
> When they divided the Man, into how many parts did they divide him?
> What was his mouth, what were his arms, what were his thighs and his feet called?
> The brahman was his mouth, of his arms were made the warrior.
> His thighs became the vaishya, of his feet the shudra was born.
> With Sacrifice the gods sacrificed the Sacrifice, these were the first of the sacred laws.
> These mighty beings reached the sky, where are the eternal spirits, the gods.

The continuance of caste was secured by its being made hereditary: the primitive taboo on commensality (eating together) became a caste law, and this in turn made it necessary to define marriage limits, leading to elaborate rules of endogamy and exogamy. The basis and continuance of the caste system depended not on the four-fold division but on the vast network of sub-castes, which was intimately connected with occupation.

Eventually, the sub-caste (*jati*, literally "birth") came to have more relevance for the day-to-day working of Hindu society than the main caste (*varna*), since the functioning of society was dependent on sub-caste relationships and adjustments, the *varna* remaining an over-all theoretical framework. Sub-caste relationships were based on specialization of work and economic interdependence. With caste becoming hereditary, and the close connection between occupation and sub-caste, there was an automatic check on individuals moving up in the hierarchy of castes. Vertical mobility was possible to the sub-caste as a whole and depended upon the entire group acting as one and changing both its location and its work. An individual could express his protest only by joining a sect which disavowed caste, such as were to evolve from the sixth century B.C. onwards.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What does the author say about the origins of class and caste?
2. What enabled the brahmans to rise to the position of the primary class?
3. What were some of the regulations that kept castes from mixing?

SELECTION 5:

The Bhagavad-Gita

The longest poem in world literature and one of the earliest Aryan literary works is the Mahabharata. It tells of a battle between two noble families reflecting the constant warfare that marked the period of the Aryan invasion into India. One part of the Mahabharata is known as the Bhagavad-Gita, the Lord's song, which professes to explain one of the fundamental ideas of the Brahman religion: reincarnation. Arjuna, commander of one army, is reminded of this when Lord Krishna, disguised as his charioteer, carries on this conversation. Lord Krishna was one of the incarna-

tions of Vishnu. Arjuna must not be frightened of fighting his relatives and killing them, for this is not the end of their existence.

Our bodies are known to end,
but the embodied self is enduring,
indestructible, and immeasurable;
therefore, Arjuna, fight the battle!

He who thinks this self a killer
and he who thinks it killed,
both fail to understand;
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Bhagavad-Gita, Barbara Stoler Miller, trans. (New York: Bantam Books, 1986), pp. 129–30.

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a young man named Svetaketu who, returning from his studies convinced that he knows it all, meets his father. His father questions what he thinks his education has taught him.

"Fetch me from thence a fruit of the Nyagrodha tree."
"Here is one, Sir."
"Break it."
"It is broken, Sir."
"What do you see there?"
"These seeds, almost infinitesimal."
"Break one of them."
"It is broken, Sir."
"What do you see there?"
"Not anything, Sir."
The father said: "My son, that subtle essence which you do not perceive there, of that very essence this great Nyagrodha tree exists.
"Believe it, my son. That which is the subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and That Thou Art, O Svetaketu."
"Place this salt in water, and then wait on me in the morning."
The son did as he was commanded.
The father said to him: "Bring me the salt, which you placed in the water last night."
The son having looked for it, found it not, for, of course, it was melted.
The father said: "Taste it from the surface of the water. How is it?"
The son replied: "It is salt."
"Taste it from the middle. How is it?"
The son replied: "It is salt."
"Taste it from the bottom. How is it?"
The son replied: "It is salt."
The father said: "Throw it away and then wait on me."
He did so; but salt exists for ever.
Then the father said: "Here also, in this body, forsooth, you do not perceive the True, my son; but there indeed it is there.
"That which is the subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and That Thou Art."

F. Max Müller, trans., *Upanishads: The Sacred Books of the East* (1879), quoted in Allie M. Frazier, ed., *Hinduism,* vol. 1 of *Readings in Eastern Religious Thought* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), pp. 135–36.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. How does this conversation relate to the passage between Lord Krishna and Arjuna (chapter 4, selection 5)?
2. What does this selection tell you about the brahman view of reality?
3. How do you think this attitude toward reality might affect Indian society?